



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

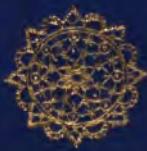
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600020917P



“G U P.”

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

“G U P.”

SKETCHES OF ANGLO-INDIAN LIFE AND CHARACTER.

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT.

(MRS. ROSS CHURCH.)

REPRINTED FROM “TEMPLE BAR.”

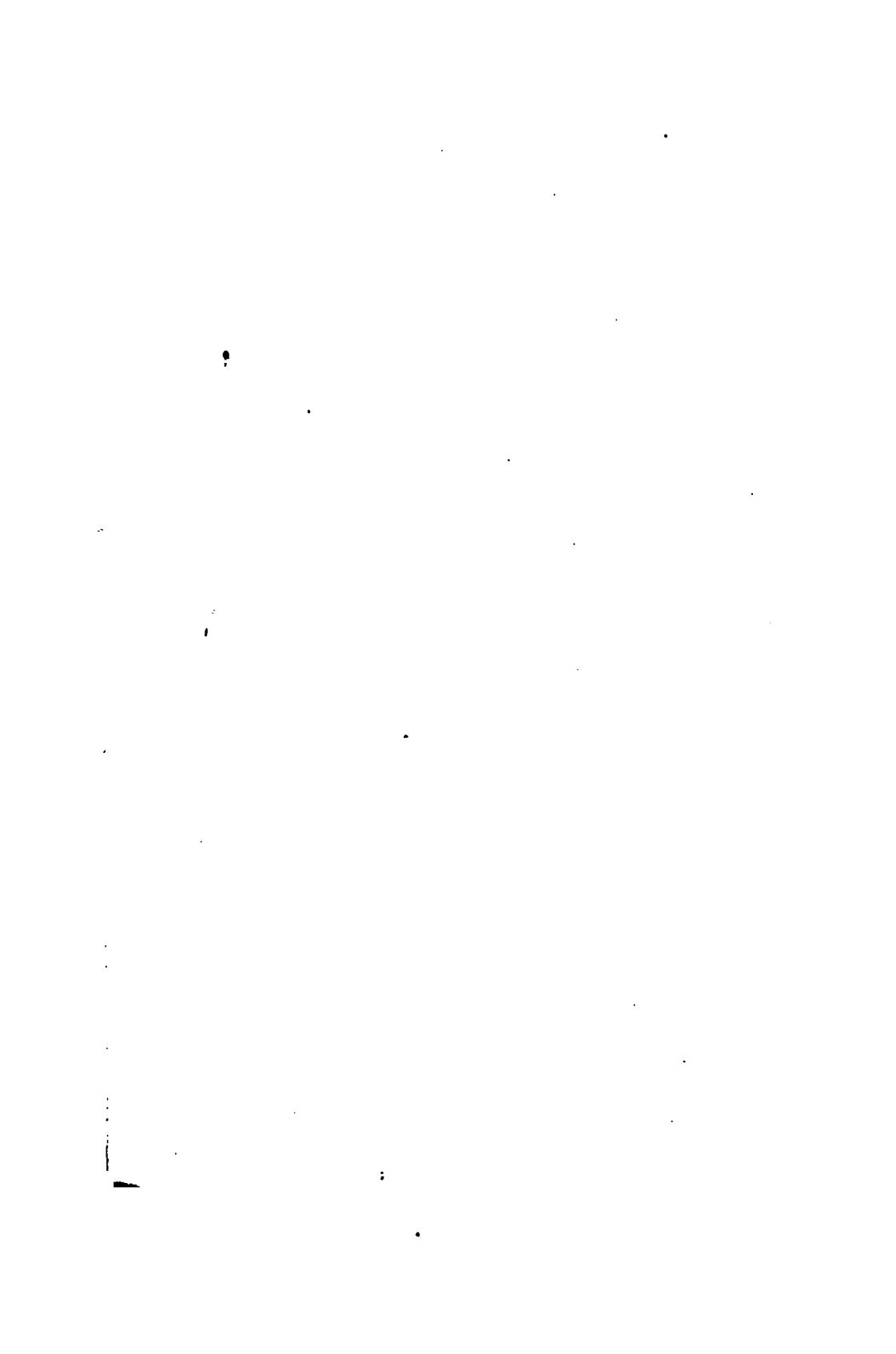


L O N D O N :

RICHARD BENTLEY, 8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1868.

203. f. 129.



“ G U P . ”

CHAPTER I.

THESE papers are what they profess to be—a series of recollections only.

During seven years passed in exile, I never made a single note concerning the places which I visited, or the people whom I saw. I have no access to any letters written at that period ; and when I add that it is now nearly six years since I returned to England, it may readily be conjectured that little, beyond the reflex of my own impressions, is to be expected from me.

Statistics are my abhorrence, and whenever I come across them in books, ostensibly written

to amuse, I invariably skip them; therefore it is hardly to be supposed that I would inflict them on others. If any old Indian therefore has already sharpened his pencil, with the intention of defacing the fair margin of these pages, with such remarks as “very true,” or, “I emphatically deny this statement,” &c., he may return it to his waistcoat pocket, for he will find nothing here to repay the trouble of composition.

Too many have already trod the beaten track of information about India, its productions, religions, and natives: the well-known road is macadamised by this time, and familiar, even to weariness; and if in jotting down these floating memories of the past, I am sometimes compelled to traverse old ground, I will endeavour to do so rapidly.

Having had the maxim, “Believe nothing that you hear, and only half that you see,” strongly impressed on my mind from my childhood upwards, I was not surprised, when I first landed in India, to find it, in almost every respect, totally different from what it had been described to me by the opposite

prejudices of such friends as desired, or did not desire, that I should go there.

My first permanent residence was Bangalore, in the Madras Presidency.

An officer in my husband's regiment had taken a house for us, and seen the furniture put in before our arrival, and I remember how kindly and thoughtfully he had provided everything for our comfort; and how it made me feel, for the first time since I had set my foot on Indian ground, that I might come to look upon it as a home. The general opinion concerning Bangalore is, firstly, that it is one of—if not *the* healthiest of stations in the Madras Presidency, and secondly, that it is very like England, both in climate and productions.

I cannot say that a residence there, at three separate periods, inclines me to corroborate either statement.

It is a large cantonment, and very cheerful and gay; far more so than Madras, which is one of the dullest places on earth. The climate rests its claims to superiority on the fact, that during eight or nine months

in the year, the nights and early mornings are very cold, so bleak, indeed, that I have slept under a couple of blankets, and riding or driving out in the morning, with two veils over my face, have had my cheeks and lips “chapped” by the wind, and my clothes covered with heavy dew. But then, considering that two hours after the sun has risen it becomes so powerfully hot that it is not safe to move out except in a close carriage, it may well be supposed that the sudden change cannot be healthy. Little children and aged people are constantly carried off in Bangalore, and even the young and strong of both sexes are subject to many throat and chest affections that are unknown in the hotter, though more equable, climate of Madras. I have heard that the rate of deaths in Trichinopoly (of which it might be said, as Sir Charles Napier remarked of Scinde, that there is only a pinch of sand and a sheet of brown paper between it and the lower regions) is considerably lower than that of Bangalore, notwithstanding its vaunted advantages of climate.

“Ah! you are going to Bangalore,” a gentleman said to me on the journey out. “You are very lucky. A charming place—just like England, you know, all kinds of fruit and vegetables growing there; peaches, nectarines, apples and cauliflowers: and then the climate, why it’s the most splendid climate in the world.” Some English fruits and vegetables certainly do grow there, but they grow like the English children, stunted and sickly. I had a few little green sour apples presented to me once; but they looked too much like an embodiment of cholera morbus to tempt me to do more than taste them; and although peach-tart is a common dish at the dinner-table, it always reminded me of those we used to have at home in the early spring, when the gardener thinned his wall-fruit, which does not say much for the size attained by the Bangalore peaches. For my own part, I prefered the native fruit, which, whether inferior in quality or not to that of my own land, was at all events genuine.

I remember being particularly charmed with a thick hedge of bushes which divided

our carriage drive from the flower-garden, and bore a plentiful crop of the tiniest and sweetest of mulberries, not larger than English blackberries, and much the same in flavour. I used to be very greedy about those mulberries. The natives constantly brought baskets of them and other fruits to us for sale, but I never cared for any but such as I gathered from our own bushes. There is something in the idea of gentlemen who never wear any clothes picking the fruit you eat which is not at all appetising.

To return to Bangalore itself: the centre of the cantonment is occupied by a large green parade ground, which looks like a well-kept common, and lined by rows of white houses, each standing, cottage-like, in its own garden, does strike the eye at first sight as might an English village on a large scale.

But otherwise it has very little of “the village” about it. It has a splendid ball-room, and race-course, one of the best circulating libraries, and, I should think *the* best band-gardens in India; several excellent churches and hotels, a few imposing-looking

private residences, and is a favourite station on account of cavalry and European regiments being generally quartered there. The houses, although they differ in size, are all built after the same pattern, and so, for the matter of that, are the grounds laid out that surround them, and which, from being generally well supplied with pink roses, are apt to strike strangers with surprise at their English appearance. They forget that prolific and prosperous as dear England is, her soil is not the original source of everything worth looking at or tasting in this world, and that the East claimed the rose as her peculiar property long before we transplanted and adopted it as our national emblem.

The Europeans who have permanent appointments in Bangalore take pains, of course, to make their surroundings as comfortable as they can, but the officers of regiments liable to be ordered off at a moment's notice have no such inducements to spend their money. Bare necessaries are all they aspire to, and very bare their houses look in consequence—or so I thought on a first acquaintance.

Before my exile came to a conclusion, however, I had learnt that it is possible for human nature to exist in a house so much more scantily furnished than the first one of which I was mistress, that I came to look back on Bangalore as a “city of palaces.”

Most of the regimental officers in that station live in their own “lines;” that is, they occupy houses clustered together, and close to the huts or barracks in which their men are located. This enforced contiguity is productive of a great deal of intimacy in a corps; at times also of a great deal of squabbling, particularly among its female followers.

When I first saw the English residents in Madras turn out for their evening drive, I mentally divided them into two classes—roast and boiled—for all those who were not as white as dough were as red as fire. When I reached Bangalore, however, I had to change my classifications. The treacherous climate of that place bears one advantage in its cutting winds and heavy dews; it freshens up the women for a few months in the year, and when I saw them first in September, they

were looking their best, and continued to do so until the following January.

I had not studied them long, however, before, putting their looks on one side, I found they might be characteristically divided into three classes — the gay; the religious; and the inane; and I deduced that the latter were the only ones who were really too stupid to care whether they lived in England or in India. For the other two carried certain unmistakable signs about them that a life (whoever it may be spent with) passed in exile from all the dear associations of our youth, is so fraught at every turn with painful recollections, that the heart that feels keenly must find something of more engrossing interest than the routine of daily life, if it would bear up at all against the assaults of memory.

Women in India are often quoted as being more careless and reckless than their sisters in England. I am not sure if the apparent truth of this assertion is not a little owing to the fact that scarcely anything can be done or said in India without its being known; but

granted that it is the case, there are greater excuses for it.

There are excuses in the fact that where a pretty woman has one temptation to be thoughtless in England she has fifty in India ; that she is compelled by the climate to lead a life of so much idleness that any excitement comes to her as a relief; and that in many cases she is left alone and unprotected for months and even years, whilst her husband is away on foreign service, and she has not one of her own family, or his, to go to during his absence. Added to which, in England a gentleman has to obtain permission before he can call upon a lady ; in India he may call on whom he pleases.

Nothing startled me more, or struck me with so wide a difference between the customs of the country I had left and that I had come to, as the etiquette observed on the other side of the world with regard to this very subject of morning calls.

In the first place, the last arrivals are expected to call upon the residents, and the introductory visit is made by the gentleman

alone. Even married men make their first round of cantonment calls without their wives, and (if her acquaintance should be desired) the return visit is made by the gentleman and lady together. This custom must, I fancy, have been instituted in those days when there was oftener an objectionable than an unobjectionable female amongst the officers' household furniture, and some such protection against their forcible entrance into respectable families was stringently needed.

Bachelors may call at any house the doors of which they choose to enter. They simply send in their cards as an introduction, and will sometimes sit for an hour or two in familiar intercourse with a person on whom they have never set eyes before. This species of free entrance to the houses of their countrymen has its origin in the spirit of patriotism which draws people of one nation so strongly together, no less than in a wish to cling to one another on the part of those who feel themselves to be exiles from a mutually-regretted home. It is very pleasant—very hospitable—and, perhaps, just as it should be; but it

leaves scope for a great deal of familiar intercourse, and the familiar intercourse, added to the idleness before alluded to, leaves scope for a great deal that had better be left undone.

Gentlemen do not confine themselves simply to calling on the ladies with whom they are likely to be intimately associated. There is so little real healthy occupation, either of business or pleasure, going on in India, that its European inhabitants are thankful for anything to do, even though it should be more trouble than enjoyment to them ; and the officers of a regiment on the march will call on the ladies of any cantonment they may be passing through, though their stay should be for a few hours only. In this manner I have received and conversed with as many as a dozen men in one morning, whom I have never had the pleasure to see again, and whom I am very sure I should not recognize if I were to meet in the street to-morrow.

Another peculiarity in Indian calling is the time at which it is perpetrated. From twelve in the morning till two in the afternoon are

the stereotyped hours, after which the ladies are supposed to take their *siestas*; a custom now totally abolished. A few mornings after my arrival in Bangalore I was attracted to my front door by the sound of a tremendous thumping in the garden of the next house; such a thumping as I can truly say I had never heard before, and which can be described only by imagining the descent of a heavy flail upon the inflated air-cushion of a giant. After listening to the novel sounds for some little time, I asked my husband what it could possibly be. He laughed at my ignorance.

“Only our next-door neighbours coming to call on you,” he replied. “They are in a ‘bullock bandy,’ and the driver can’t get the bullocks to start.”

And, sure enough, after a little more persuasion, a tremendous rush was heard, the clumsy carriage, built something like a small omnibus on two wheels, was carried violently by the obstinate brutes that drew it down our neighbour’s carriage-drive and up our own, and the next minute two large white bullocks

—splendid fellows of the Mysore breed—were pulled up, glaring and panting, under the portico, whilst their driver kept watch over them with the iron-tipped goad with which he both guided and urged them.

Before I left India the sight of “bullock-bandies” was as familiar to me as that of omnibuses is now, but I never liked to drive in one. There is a see-saw motion, consequent on the jolting trot of the cloven-footed animals, and the principle on which the vehicles they draw are manufactured, unpleasantly resembling that of a boat at sea; added to which there is something in being driven by a human (but anything but humane) monkey, armed with an iron-tipped goad, who divides his time between keeping up an incessant “clucking” with his lips, and an incessant twitching with his hand at the rope which is attached to a ring in the nose of the unfortunate quadruped he drives, which is distasteful to a mind prejudiced in favour of English customs and manners.

I must say that calling in India, notwithstanding all its *désagrémens* of time and tem-

perature, is sometimes productive of great amusement, and that the country would be more empty of occupation than it is without it. You are also, generally speaking, sure of obtaining admittance to the houses you visit. In a place where Europeans are forbidden by the climate to stir out of doors during certain hours, it is very difficult to find a plausible excuse for refusing to see visitors. Some few there are, of course, as in England, who make a point of never being fit to be seen by anybody, and the apologies made by the native servants for their non-appearance are sometimes very amusing. The usual question on reaching the portico of an Indian bungalow is, “Can missus see?”—it being a popular superstition amongst the Europeans that to enable a native to understand English, he must be addressed as if he were deaf, and in the most infantile language. If a lady desires on any particular occasion to be invisible, she has already given the general order, “Missus can’t see,” for the benefit of her visitors; but a native can never deliver a message pure and undefiled. He considers it not sufficiently

polite, perhaps, that it should be unaccompanied by an excuse, and so he generally invents one. “Missus washing head,” and “Missus in tub,” are two of their favourite devices for getting out of the scrape, and I have overheard a servant detailing such a circumstantial story of my being out, and where I had gone, and wherefore, that I felt a double criminal, lying on my sofa, to think I had unintentionally laid such a burden on his soul.

There is an immense deal of party spirit in India, as I suppose there invariably is where so few people are gathered together; but there is also a great amount of tuft-hunting, which is less excusable, and far more vulgar, and which takes the form in so military a country, of worship of rank, whether in the army or the civil service. I have met with more than one instance where women have been so thoroughly imbued with this lowest of ideas, that they thought the standing of their husbands in the service entitled them to interfere in the private affairs of people not only better born and bred than themselves,

but infinitely more capable of knowing what was the right thing to do.

In 1855, when the Commander-in-chief of Madras was staying for a few days in Bangalore, Mrs. A—— held a *levée*, which most of the ladies in the place attended. Happening to be ill at the time, and unequal to much exertion, I expressed my determination not to be present on the occasion to one of my acquaintances. She was what is technically termed in that part of the world a “Cape Filly,” that is, she had been simply transplanted from the Cape to Bangalore, and her astonishment at my temerity was extreme.

“Not going to attend the *levée*!” she exclaimed. “Why, it’s your *duty* to go.”

I told her that I could not view the matter exactly in that light, considering that it was only the invitation of one lady to another, and that I was not under the orders of Mrs. A——, as my husband was under those of the Commander-in-chief.

“No,” she replied, compelled to agree in the truth of my argument, although evidently shocked at my audacity in coupling the names

of Mrs. A—— and myself together; “of course not, but you will allow that she is the *rankest* lady in Madras, and therefore I think we are all bound to show her respect.”

Amongst the many new acquaintances that I made on first settling in Bangalore, was an officer of the old school, a remnant of that period when *anything* was good enough for India. He was going up to the Hills to get married; having told his friends the year before that, as his services now entitled him to draw an amount of pay which would cover the expenses of education for four children (which he considered the proper number for a family), he had quite made up his mind to settle. Acting upon which determination, he had written proposals of marriage to three young ladies consecutively, and been refused; but as he had been sufficiently indiscreet to send precisely the same letter to each one of them, and they happened to be acquainted with one another, his secret soon became noised abroad, and was turned into a standing joke against him.

Nothing daunted, however, this valiant son

of Mars tried his luck a fourth time, and was successful at last, as he really deserved to be. When I first saw him he was about to start on his wedding trip, and having no box small enough to fit in under the “transit” seats, and carry the few things he required for his two days’ journey, he asked my husband if he could lend him one.

I had a small travelling box of the kind required, and was glad of the opportunity to oblige him.

He was very grateful at the time, and apparently did not forget my kindness afterwards; for on his return to Bangalore, he sent me back my box, with an enclosure of one pot of peach jam, and one bottle of Norton’s camomile pills (as a corrective, I concluded, for the jam), with a note to intimate that I was to consider them “as an equivalent.”

I ate his jam. I cannot say I took his pills, which, however, he assured me, when we met, were the best medicine going.

The same gentleman, some little while afterwards, on being invited by us to dinner, sent over in the course of the day a loan, in the

shape of a dozen of cut custard-glasses, which (without having previously inquired into the resources of our pantry) he said we were sure to require for custards to go with the “Europe” tart.

So much for the old school. I think most people will agree with me, that if the new school is less officiously good-natured, it is more endurable.

CHAPTER II.

WE hear of the poorer classes of Roman Catholics in Ireland being “priest-ridden.” As soon as I had made a few acquaintances in Bangalore, and commenced to look about me, I began to think that the larger half of its residents might truthfully be termed “missionary-ridden.”

Since the time I write of, I have met, both at Masulipatam and Rangoon, with missionaries whose zealous and self-denying labours were enough to make the hearer blush to contemplate his own—comparatively speaking—useless life. But when I first arrived in Bangalore I had met but one of the class, and that a sorry specimen. Therefore, I must be

excused if I was not disposed to look upon the doings of the missionaries there in as favourable a light as were their proselytes; and if I proved sufficiently unprejudiced to be able to distinguish what was true and earnest in their religion from a great deal of humbug and pretension.

Quartered there at the same time as ourselves was a certain Major T——, who was particularly devoted to the missionaries, and who possessed a wife to whom nature had been very unkind; so much so, indeed, as to render her a noticeable object, even amongst other women who were old and ill-favoured. Remarking the circumstance one day to a friend, I expressed my wonder as to the reason that had induced her husband to marry her.

“Why, don’t you know the story of their marriage?” exclaimed the gentleman with whom I was conversing. “As soon as Major T—— was converted by the missionaries, they told him that if he wished to prove the truth of the desire which he expressed to lead a new life, he must marry, for no man could

be a Christian who had not a wife. Upon this, he said he should be very glad to do so, but he didn't know any one who would have him. ‘Oh! there will be no difficulty about that,’ was the reply, ‘for we will direct our people to send you out a wife from the mission at home.’ Accordingly, Major T—— was provided with a partner free of expense, only, unfortunately for him, the stock-in-trade of good young women being low at the time, Mrs. T—— was the result of the missionaries' application on his behalf.”

This story was, I believe, from after inquiry, strictly true; but a sequel which I heard affixed to it, renders it doubly absurd. It seems that another virtuous young man being in want of a wife at the same time, two girls were exported for their benefit; but the other fellow being sharper than Major T—— got off to the vessel before him, and made the first choice. What a state of mind the second candidate must have been in, when he arrived on board, and encountered his share! Scarcely in a suitable one, I am afraid, for the pet of the missionaries. And yet these men, who

profess to lead our steps heavenwards, would entail upon their fellow creatures, in the cause of virtue, all the evil passions and misery which generally follow in the wake of that irremediable error—an ill-assorted marriage. Major T——, at the time I knew him, had grown-up daughters of his own, who happily had inherited more of his appearance than that of their mother. Yet, after his own experience, he could go to a young officer who had just been “bestridden” by the missionary power, and say to him, as he had been told himself, “Marry, marry.”

“But who am I to marry, sir?” was the echoed reply.

“You can marry one of my daughters; there are three of them: take your choice.”

“I don’t know which I should like best,” the young man said, ruefully; “however, I’ll visit at your house for a few weeks, and when I’ve decided you shall have my answer.”

And so the choice was eventually made; and a bargain was concluded by two men who would have turned up their eyes at the men-

tion of a godless union between a couple of unbelievers.

Whilst I lived in Bangalore, a German missionary was there, whose name of H—— is known throughout the length and breadth of Madras. He was a very singular person, endowed with a certain degree of cleverness, and a talent for coarse mimicry, which went down very well with the lower orders, and rendered him a favourite with the soldiers. He, doubtless, held great sway over them, and if he had confined himself to beguiling them into his chapel on week-day evenings, to listen to his curious discourses, instead of drinking arrack in the “ bazaar,” he might have done great good.

But he was self-sufficient and conceited at the same time, and trading on his profession and his foreign birth, used to force himself upon the notice and into the presence of people who had no desire for his acquaintance.

He spoke to everybody he met, stranger or not, and would take no denial when calling at houses where he wished to enter. He carried with him a number of picture cards, his favourite

one of which was a dreadful red heart, with all the known vices transcribed upon it, which he would draw forth upon a first interview, and inform you was a faithful representation of your own.

Going one day into the house of an officer, whom he had never seen before, he commenced with the abrupt question—“What is your name?”

“William ——,” was the answer.

“How are you?” continued the visitor.

“Quite well, thank you.

“*Bill!*” exclaimed the German missionary, emphatically, “*You’re a liar!*”

This not being the ordinary mode of address between English gentlemen who meet for the first time, “Bill” was about to make some angry remonstrance at the accusation, when the missionary continued :

“It is *not* well with you; it is very ill. Your soul is sick unto death.”

And thereupon producing his cards, and various tracts, he proceeded to explain the supposed state of his mental interior to the astonished young officer, who, however, had

the good nature and good sense to pass over the silly affront, and only make a joke of what might very reasonably have been turned into a quarrel.

At another time, Mr. H—— entered a house belonging to a friend of mine whilst her husband was absent, and talked to her in so coarse a strain that she was frightened, and her account of the missionary's rudeness was so great that her husband vowed if ever he set foot in his “compound” again, that he would order his horse-keepers to turn him out.

An excellent story was current of this man having met an officer driving rapidly down hill in a “buggy” which had a vacant seat, and saying to him as he passed :

“ You are driving to hell, sir. You are driving to the devil.”

“ All right, H——,” was the unconcerned reply, “jump in, here's a place for you.”

Another young fellow whom he used to visit was wont to excite his ire by calling out after him, just as he had left his bungalow, and in the hearing of the soldiers, to whom

he was always preaching the doctrine of temperance and sobriety, “ Won’t you have *one more* glass of brandy-and-water before you go ?”

But these were the doings and sayings of the unregenerate, who could not be made to understand that a missionary spirit entitled a man to outrage all the rules of society and of courtesy. The followers of the German apostle were vehement in his praise, and would hear nothing ever whispered to his disadvantage. His sermons I have heard described as extremely ludicrous ; but as they were seldom delivered without allusions being made which were disagreeable for a lady to listen to in public, I never honoured his lectures with my attendance. He used to imitate animals in the pulpit, when the subject of his discourse led him to wish to do so ; and once when he was “ lowing ” like the oxen, the imitation was so natural that some carriage bullocks which were tethered outside the chapel heard and answered him.

Mr. H——’s idea of the manners of European society is too good to be omitted,

although some of it may be attributed to his foreign birth and breeding.

There is a good band-garden at Bangalore, and each evening the band of one or other of the regiments stationed in the cantonment plays there. The carriages are drawn up in order in their appointed position ; the equestrians stand still, or canter their horses in the outer circles, as they think fit ; and the gentlemen generally dismount and loiter about the grass and flower-beds, talking to their friends. The German missionary, on being asked what he thought of the institution of the band, and whether it was harmful or not, replied that he did not approve of it at all—that it was very well for old, tried Christians, but very bad for the young men.

“ They go to the band,” he said ; “ they walk round ; they say to the ladies ‘ my dear ! ’ and ‘ my darling ! ’ and that is all. It is very bad ; it is not good.”

There was a very wicked story going the round of the Neilgherry Hills the last time that I was up there, with respect to this gentleman, by which it was affirmed that

when a house which he occupied at Conoor was accidentally burned down, a quantity of empty bottles and a lady's bonnet were conspicuous amongst the articles which were destroyed. Under the sway of the missionaries many of the ladies of Bangalore of a necessity belonged to my second class, and were very religious, or thought themselves so. They held “mothers' meetings” for the native women, at which, by dint of stuffing them with a good deal of curry and rice, and promising them new clothes at the end of the year, they managed to secure the attendance of a few cunning natives, whom some of the ladies, to prove their philanthropy and sense of the feeling of universal brotherhood which should exist between Christians, used actually to *kiss*. This I know to be a fact, as it was related to me by the very unsensitive person who had performed the operation.

I am no advocate for the religion which cants, and the tract system possesses little charms for me. I believe strongly what a good man once told me that he believed, that the species of tracts usually disseminated—which

are weakly-worded and designed—have done more harm, by affording a subject for scoffing, than any really well-written book has done good, for we are all reluctant to submit to be taught by what we feel to be an offered insult to our understanding.

“Crumbs for the Craving Christian,” and “Buttons for Unbelievers’ Breeches” (these titles are *real*; I am not clever enough to invent such to suit my purpose) are not calculated to excite my reverence; and I know that the ladies alluded to above looked upon me as a lost sheep, whenever the subject of their missionary meetings, their tracts and picture cards, and their converted natives, was brought forward.

For, if I dislike tracts, I dislike the natives of Madras still more.

I do not believe any stories of their honesty, fidelity, or attachment to the service of their masters, to be applicable to them *generally*, or to hold good at all, except in individual cases, and those very rare and far between.

Of course, natives have been very cruelly treated by Europeans, but their usual be-

haviour is so aggravating that, however much I may condemn, I cannot wonder at any one losing control of their temper when with them; but in general they serve you well as long as it suits their convenience to do so, and when it does not no amount of past kindness and indulgence will secure you from the effects of their ingratitude. I had an instance of this in the case of a young native nurse called “Anemah,” who had been in my service for more than a year, and of whom I was really fond. She was a particularly nice girl for a native, very clever and bright, and spoke English well. A short time before she left me I observed that she had grown rude in her manner of addressing me, and once or twice she so grossly disobeyed my orders that I felt strongly inclined to discharge her, but on account of her supposed attachment to my child I refrained from doing so. One night, however, when she came into my bedroom, where I had retired, preparatory to lying down to sleep on her own bed by the infant’s cot, she stood at the door, and commenced abusing me in the vilest language in her

broken English, and calling me by a string of low names which she had caught up from the soldiers in the barracks. Being then very ignorant of the native character, I was perfectly paralyzed by the virulence of her abuse, and asked her at first what she meant, and why she attacked me in that manner ; but my question only called down a fresh tirade from her mouth. I then summoned the “butler” (as the native head-servants love to call themselves), and ordered him to put the girl out of the “compound,” and let her take her things with her, because I would never allow her to enter the house again. This was accordingly done, and “ayahs” being as plentiful as blackberries in India, her place was soon filled up. A few months after, I was sitting in the drawing-room when Anemah’s smiling face peeped in at the venetians. A pleasant, cheerful face it always had been, except on the last occasion of my seeing it, and now it appeared brighter than ever, and, notwithstanding our summary parting, I could not help speaking kindly to the woman.

“ Well, Anemah, what do you want ? I

thought I said you were never to come here again.”

But Anemah grinned on :

“I all right now, ma’am. Missus want ‘amah’ (or wetnurse) for the baby?”

I assured her that I was in want of no such luxury, and then the truth came out. Anemah, finding herself in a condition which she knew would insure her dismissal from my service before long, had, finding none of her hints would avail to procure her discharge, fallen back upon the (to a native) not uncommon expedient of biting the hand which had fed her, sooner than confess the fault of which she had been guilty. After the business was over, and herself at liberty to take service again, she evidently quite thought that I should be as ready to receive her back into my house. But though I never regretted the loss of a native woman so much, I remained firm, and Anemah had to seek another mistress.

The native men inspired me from the beginning with the greatest contempt, not only for their want of strength, both mental and physical, but for the way in which they gloried

in the fact. I have known a Madras servant refuse to lift a box, which I carried with one hand, and when I attempted to urge him to something like emulation, he only remarked :

“ English very strong—native man not so strong,” and evidently felt not the slightest shame in the confession.

I always felt the keenest sympathy with the action of an officer in our regiment, who, aggravated at the slow and solemn manner in which a young Mussulman in his employ was carrying a pile of plates from the luncheon-table out at his back door, jumped up, and regardless of the fate of his crockery, gave the tardy domestic such an energetic kick that he sent him flying, plates and all, down a flight of some dozen steps, into the garden, vastly astonished, I have little doubt, at the unexpected impetus which had been given to his footsteps.

Their characters may be summed up in a word : the men are cruel, crafty, and indolent ; the women notoriously vicious ; and the consequence is that such a thing as natural affection is little known amongst them. The

greatest instinct they possess, perhaps, is that of maternal love ; but as I have seen a woman sell her child to a man who had none of his own, for a coin worth seven shillings and a piece of cloth, without evincing the slightest emotion at parting with it, and had another living in my own “ compound ” who preferred to see her baby almost starve before her eyes, to taking the trouble to bring it to the house to procure suitable food, I cannot say that I have much faith in their possession of much of even this feeling, which we share in common with the brutes of the field.

Both men and women are inveterate liars, and it is impossible to place dependence upon anything that they say. The decision of a case in a native court depends simply upon the fact of which side swears the hardest ; for witnesses may be hired to lie for you for a very small sum of money.

One of our officers having been engaged in some wild freak, and summoned before the cantonment magistrate in consequence, his servant suggested a ready remedy for the scrape he had got into.

“Let me go, sir,” he urged ; “I’ll go and *make swear* that master was sick in bed at the time, and knew nothing about it.”

Another common complaint of theirs, and one which was constantly being made known to us by letters, was that their wives had been insulted by one of their fellow-servants, and would we cause a rupee to be stopped from the delinquent’s pay for the ensuing month. Every wrong may be patched up for a native by dint of the magic rupee.

Money for their false witness ; money for their wives’ dishonour ; anything and everything may be paid for in their eyes, and they would gladly suffer twice the loss, or the blame, for the sake of twice the money.

CHAPTER III.

I HAVE said elsewhere that I believe the charge of extra levity against ladies in India to be unfounded, and to have taken its rise simply in the reason that there are, comparatively speaking, so few of them, and those few have so much leisure, that liaisons and flirtations, that we should at home have no time to talk about, are considered sufficient to form matter of discussion for a whole cantonment abroad. Who Mrs. So-and-so is flirting with now, and why Captain Dash is to be seen constantly at Such-a-one's house, are untiring themes for inquiry and decision; and the idle gossip which I have heard repeated about men and women, whom I believed to be entirely inno-

cent of any intention beyond showing friend-
ship towards one another, has sickened me of
listening to scandal about any one; particu-
larly as the women who were fondest of re-
lating such stories, I generally found to be
those most open to suspicion themselves.

Men from the East, who are happy in the
possession of virtuous and elegant wives, are
apt to let their tempers do more than simmer,
if any general charge is laid against the lady
residents of their adopted country, and no one
can blame them for the chivalrous feeling
which prompts their vigorous defence. But
one swallow does not make a summer; and
one man's word is worth nothing against the
tide of public opinion. There may be many
virtuous and upright women in India (God
forbid, considering they are English women,
that there should not be); there are plenty
amongst them who can dress well and talk
well; but, *as a class*, they do not strike a new-
comer from the mother-country favourably.

From whence the evil arises, heaven only
knows; their minds and energies may rust
and dull from the effects of the climate, or the

tone of their morals become lowered from the want of spiritual instruction, in the up-country stations; but it is assuredly true that whenever a stranger sees a pretty, healthy, or fashionable-looking woman amongst them, he invariably finds that she is as fresh to the place as himself. You might as well transplant a mountain daisy into a hot-house and expect it to thrive, as look for an English complexion to last beneath the sun of India, or English customs to hold good in a climate so different from that for which they were instituted.

I am not alluding now to the wives of officers who remain in India but a few years, nor to those ladies who may be happy enough to visit England at no distant intervals; I speak only of those who have been born and brought up in the country, or have lived in it so long that they have almost forgotten their native land.

I called at one house in Bangalore, where I was received by the whole family without *stockings*; in they came, as if it was the most natural thing in the world to go bare-footed

in the hot season, and dressed in the most astonishing of costumes, with their hair done “anyhow,” sat and discoursed on the topics of interest, then floating about Bangalore, with as much nonchalance as if they had just emerged from the hands of a Parisian lady’s-maid. Many officers’ wives in India come from Australia, the Cape, or the Mauritius, and an attempted amalgamation with them invariably ends in failure ; they are always so very certain that whatever part of the world they sprang from is *the* most fashionable and important ; and as they have never seen England, any subject which bears upon it, or its customs, falls flat, and is generally received as a species of personal affront.

“ You shouldn’t talk about England to Mrs. ——,” my husband used to say to me in my griffin days ; “ you know she has never been there. She will think you do it on purpose to make her uncomfortable.”

“ Good heavens !” I would reply. “ What on earth am I to talk about ? Every subject I start seems to bear upon the forbidden topic.”

And I did perceive after a while that the ladies who had never been to England always avoided the subject; and in some instances, pretending that they had been there, made such ludicrous mistakes as to betray themselves.

Some of the European women in India have a horrid custom, when they are leaving a place, or tired of their wardrobes, of sending round a native with a box to the various houses, with their old things for sale, and faded ball-dresses, crushed wreaths of flowers, and other articles of female gear, are bought thence by such ladies as I have spoken of above. They thought I held my head “very high,” the first time I expressed my unmitigated disgust at the bare notion of wearing an evening robe which had already been worn by another, and affirmed that I would rather go without a dress. They prophesied that what they were pleased to call my fastidiousness would come down before I left the country; but I am happy to say it never did. In some Indian stations this custom of selling old things amounts to a mania. I knew one couple who

never permitted a friend to enter their house for an ordinary call without pestering them to buy something.

“Look here,” the gentleman would say, leading his guest about by the button; “what’ll you buy? Do you want an arm-chair? You shall have that one dirt-cheap, if you like; I gave a hundred rupees for it; fact, my dear fellow, and you shall have it for eighty, if you choose. No one else but *you*, though. I could get a hundred and twenty for it to-morrow; or do you want a table?” &c. &c.

It was a curious thing that these amateur “cheap-jacks” never appeared to covet any of their neighbours’ property; on the contrary, the best way to get rid of their importunities was to ask them in return to buy something of your own.

The wife of a man well up in the service, and far above anything like want, having died soon after her arrival from England, he had the indecency to send the whole of her wearing apparel round the cantonment for sale, even to her linen and travelling-boxes,

marked with her name. After this, the force of fancy—with respect to the grief of widowers—can no further go.

There was a certain lady Tartar in Bangalore at the same time as myself, whose doings in her favourite line, which generally took the form of tussling with the natives, were so famous, that it was a common thing to hear one acquaintance ask of another : “ Well, what’s the last skit about Mrs. B—— ?”

Her servants had constantly been with complaints of her conduct to them to the police-magistrate, but as natives make a case out of very little, and the lady’s husband was a man of standing, they did not gain all the credence which they deserved.

One day, however, a boiled batter-pudding appeared at her dinner-table, and excited her easily-aroused ire ; this “ lady ” seized the offending comestible with a spoon, and threw it at the native butler’s head, and the shot, for an enraged female, having been remarkably true, it hit the servant right in the eye. Boiled batter-pudding being a substance which retains heat long, the shock must have been

more unexpected than soothing to the visual organ of the indignant native. However, with extreme presence of mind, he clapped his hand upon the poultice which he had received “gratis and all for nothing,” tore out of the house, down the road, and into the very presence of the cantonment magistrate, whose court was then sitting.

“Master not believe she give ‘garley !’
Master not believe she throw knives ! Master
now see what that missus doing.”

And if the native did not get the justice which he expected with regard to the batter-pudding—the story of his mistress’s revenge flew far and wide throughout Bangalore, and if any one thereafter came under the lash of her tongue, he was used to say that he had got “one of Mrs. B——’s puddings in his eye.”

This lady gained further notoriety by administering *ground glass* to some dogs (the pets of a gentleman living near), who offended her by entering her compound and making friends with her own canine favourites. The poor animals died in great pain : and there were not a few of us, on the occasion, who

would have liked to administer a little ground glass in return to their murdereress.

The manner in which some of the weddings are conducted in India is very strange. To most cantonments there is attached a “wedding bungalow”—that is to say, some house built at a little distance in the country has been used so often for the purpose of the honeymoon (which means one week's leave from the regiment), that it has come to bear that title.

There were two such bungalows in Bangalore. One built by a Mr. Morrison, went by the familiar name of “Morrison's Pills,” and the other by a Mr. Abraham, was called “Abraham's Bosom.”

A young officer having very foolishly married a daughter of one of the Madras shopkeepers, the bride and bridegroom were met the same evening, walking out arm-in-arm to “Abraham's Bosom,” with four “coolies” carrying their cots just in front of them. Another couple of my acquaintance, having some little distance to travel after their wedding, were divorced at the church-door, placed

in separate transits and taken to their destination.

This was not so bad as the case of a young lady who, having been refused in marriage to the man she cared for, by her parents, determined to bring them to her way of thinking by eloping with her lover; which she accordingly did from a ball, as in India it would be next to impossible to run away in the day-time. This young lady had never considered, however, *where* she was to run to (for there were no hotels then in the cantonment), and the resident clergyman, even if he would have married her without the consent of her father, could not do so until the following day. And so she eloped to her lover's bungalow, where she was found the next morning, very penitent, and in her ball dress; and considering all things, the papa thought, on being summoned to her side, that he had better let the ceremony proceed. So they were married off-hand, and before night, a set of doggrel verses, detailing the whole occurrence, with notes by the author, were all over Bangalore.

The rapidity with which engagements are

entered into in India is a fertile source of the unhappy marriages which often follow them. A girl arrives in her destined presidency, and if she is tolerably good-looking, receives, probably, more attention in a week than she has encountered during her whole life at home. Or, a man coming down from a single station up-country to one of the larger cantonments, sees several women together, and falls in love for the very novelty of the thing ; often with some old girl whom he would not look at in England, who has been years on hand, and become proportionately sharp in selecting the most unwary of the sex, wherewith to further her designs for wedded happiness. For one of the greatest proofs of India's progressing civilization is, that now there *are* old maids there occasionally.

There is no such thing as a long engagement in India : it is propose to-day, and marry to-morrow ; thus, no time is allowed for escape from the effects of one's own thoughtlessness.

An officer in Madras, who had proposed whilst very much elevated with champagne,

to a “party” considerably his senior, quarrelled with his lady-love, and wrote to his cousin on the Neilgherry Hills, to announce the breaking off of the engagement. The cousin’s answer was terse, but to the point :

“ DEAR JACK,—You’re uncommonly lucky : it was a regular case of ‘hook,’ and I never was so glad to hear of anything in my life.”

But unfortunately, on the road his letter passed a second communication from the “pretendu,” which mildly commenced :

“ DEAR JEM,—Congratulate me : my engagement with Miss P—— is on again, &c. &c.”

What the cousin’s conscience must have experienced on the reception, it is hard to imagine ; but the marriage really took place, and was, to all appearances, anything but a happy one.

A very little man (this incident occurred whilst the left wing of our regiment was in China) having been engaged for some years to a lady in England, rashly made arrangements for her joining him in Hong-Kong.

But the lapse of time had not improved the sylph-like appearance of the fair one's form. She was not only a very big woman, but she had grown uncommonly stout.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed the affrighted bridegroom, rushing into the mess-room, after his first interview with her, “am I expected to marry *all that?*”

This reminds me of an officer in one of the presidencies, who, in anticipation of a similar event, had purchased a riding-horse from a friend, for the use of his expected wife. But after the lady's advent, he appeared at his comrade's house, with a very rueful face, to ask if he would mind taking back the animal.

“He will be of no earthly use to my wife,” he said, shaking his head, “he couldn't carry her. She always *was* a good weight, but *now* —she's a *whopper!*”

One more anecdote of a funny engagement, and I have done.

There was a very pretty girl in Madras, just arrived from England. The men were all mad about her, but no one who had not a

good appointment, or the prospect of one, was insane enough to think of proposing for her hand.

One morning two young civilians, staying at the club, were taking their breakfast together—one appeared very nervous and fidgety, and on his friend pressing him for the cause, confessed in confidence that he had made up his mind to propose that day to Miss S—.

“The devil!” exclaimed his companion; “why, it’s what I was just going to do myself.”

Here was a difficulty; they were very good friends, and had no wish to place a stumbling-block in one another’s paths, and they had equally good reasons for supposing that the lady might choose to smile upon them; but then she couldn’t smile upon both.

“I’ll tell you what we will do,” one of them said at last, “we’ll toss up who shall pop the question first, and if he’s accepted, why there’s an end of the business, if not, the other can try his luck.”

Which accordingly was done, and the first

suitors having been beaten, the second pulled off the stakes at the Madras Cathedral a few weeks afterwards; and it were well if every contest of the kind ended as peacefully.

CHAPTER IV.

I THINK no better proof could be given of the monotony and uselessness of existence passed in an Indian station, than the fact that, on the first occasion of my seeing Bangalore, I lived there for twelve months, and yet have nothing to relate respecting it, except a few idle stories.

There was no lack of amusement, if the heat, to which I was unaccustomed, had not so enervated me that I lost my interest in such things. Ball succeeded to ball, and dinner to dinner, and there was the usual amount of dancing, and flirting, and eating at both ; there were excellent races, and plenty of reviews and brigades, to say nothing of

minor pleasures, and yet each sun set as it rose, and left a feeling behind it of an utterly wasted day, the description of one of which will serve for all.

Why will writers on India romance so largely? I am not alluding to those who have never been there, because their cheating is so very palpable that it almost loses the name, and merely excites the same pitiful smile with which an old salt might peruse a lady's description of a fight at sea. But men and women who have really visited the Madras Presidency (I must be understood to speak of no other) should know better than to represent the natives as constantly “salaaming” to the earth, and standing all day long, with fans in their hands, behind ladies extended on the sofa, and answering, when spoken to, in a mixture of broken English and Hindustani.

In the first place, very few Madras natives understand Hindustani; their general language is Tamil. In the second, they mostly speak English, which (excepting that, like all foreigners, they are puzzled by the verbs and adverbs) is perfectly intelligible.

The question to a female servant on her engagement, of “Can you speak English?” is generally answered by :

“ Yes, ma’am, I speaking English—same as missus ; ” and a lady going out to India nowadays has no more need to speak the language than she would have to speak French on going to Paris. Having little to occupy me, I was rather desirous at first of studying Hindustani with my husband, but he would not permit me to do so. Afterwards I saw the sense of his decision ; for as he was either quartermaster or adjutant of his regiment during the whole period of my sojourn in India, and the sepoys, who were constantly coming up to his office with various complaints, are not very choice in their language, and what is said in one part of an Indian house is heard all over it, it was better I should not understand them. I have been told that the conversation of the natives, as a rule, is too filthy to be imagined, which always gave me a great horror of permitting my children to pick up the Tamil language from their ayahs ; for this reason I made a point of never engaging a

woman to attend upon them who did not speak English ; but as their knowledge of our tongue is mostly acquired from the soldiers in the barracks, their expressions are sometimes very amusing, and it is the funniest thing possible to hear a native drop her H's. But to return to the history of one of my Indian days.

I usually rose about five o'clock, and took a ride on horseback until seven. Then I had the “chota haziree,” or “little breakfast,” which has been so often talked about, and which, in plain English, is nothing but very naturally taking a cup of tea after a gallop. After which I was used to change my riding-habit, have a cold bath (ah ! what would India be without cold water !), and dress myself for breakfast and visitors.

Breakfast was served about ten ; after which visitors began to call, and engaged my time until two o'clock, which is the general luncheon hour, and supposed by formalists to be the moment when they must take their leave. After “tiffin,” travellers and novelists inform us that the “siesta” is taken. It certainly is a drowsy, heavy time, for the sun is then at

his meridian ; every living creature out of doors has crept under shelter, and a great silence pervades the whole cantonment. But I never went to sleep then, and I don't believe anybody else did, unless they were ill.

I think I must plead guilty, when it was very, *very* hot, of occasionally taking off my dress, and lying down on the bed with a book, until it was time to bathe again, preparatory to putting on my habit for the evening ride. This occurred about half-past five or six ; and whether I was on horseback, or in a carriage, the routine was always the same. First, for a canter, or a blow, along the racecourse, or up to the high ground, and then to the band. Here the carriage was drawn up, or the horse brought to a stand-still, and, everybody in the cantonment being also present, I could gossip to my heart's content until the shades of night had fallen. Then there was a gallop home in the dark, and, if there was any party to attend, dressing to be at once gone through ; if not, a few songs sung, a good many yawns yawned, and then bed until five o'clock the next morning, when the whole business recommenced.

I challenge the friends who lived with me in Bangalore to say if this account is true or not. Is it wonderful that a life so passed should be productive of a great deal of folly and wrong?

People will say that the English might make employment for themselves in India if they chose; that being, for the most part, educated men and women, they must be in the possession of accomplishments, if nothing else.

The women generally are; but no one who has not been subjected to the enervating character of the climate can imagine how it drains the mind of all desire to improve itself, until it comes to be satisfied with stagnation and wish for nothing better. I took out fancy-work to Madras with me, which I never accomplished; after a short time the needle would so dull in my hot hands, that the exertion of pulling it through the cloth was too much for me. Every woman knows how irritating it is to work with a needle that will not pass glibly through the material. Even the native tailors who are in your service, and sit cross-legged all day long in the verandah

working, are obliged to keep a bowl of water by their sides, to dip and cool their fingers in as they proceed. And I remember my great difficulty was, not to get my work done, but to find sufficient for my tailors to do ; for the natives sew very fast and very neatly. Singing is hard work, too, in a hot climate, and the pianos get out of tune. I think drawing in water-colours is about the nicest and most useful employment that any one can have out there ; but, unfortunately, I was too stupid to do that myself.

The men who have not appointments waste their days quite as much as the women ; for they smoke their lives away—and we all know what smoking generally leads to. No mother whose son is destined to spend his best days in India, can do him a greater kindness than by seeing that the culture of whatever accomplishment he may possess the taste for is not neglected amid his general education.

The best men that I have known in India, the quietest, most moral, and I think I may add the happiest and healthiest, have been these who had a taste for music, or some

equally innocent means of passing their time during the hot part of the day, instead of spending it in shirt and trousers, with their legs higher than their heads, a cigar in their mouths, and a tumbler of brandy-and-water within reach.

I have mentioned what struck me as strange in the behaviour of those ladies who were more Indian than English in their manners, but I am not going to dismiss the subject without animadverting on the conduct of some of the wives of officers in English corps, who used, on account of their own supposed superiority, to affect greatly to *look down* upon the married ladies of the “N. I.” (as the Native Infantry regiments are technically termed), as well as upon their husbands. After a period of seven years spent continuously in the presence of both, I may be supposed to be capable of forming an opinion on the subject, and I most emphatically affirm that, as a rule, I have never met with gentlemen anywhere to surpass in breeding and manners the officers of the Native Infantry regiments in Madras, Bengal, and Bombay.

There may be a great deal of lords' blood drafted into the European corps, but there is also a vast amount of shopkeepers', and one is not quite certain on an introduction upon which one may fall ; besides, men holding the position of officers in our home regiments have often risen from the ranks, and raised their wives with them ; which is an accident which can never happen in an N. I. regiment.

One of these newly-made ladies was asked at Bangalore whether she knew Mrs. So-and-So, whose husband belonged to the (supposed) inferior army.

“Oh, dear, no,” was the emphatic reply. “I never call upon *Hen Hi Hofficers'* wives.”

And I am sure the “*Hen Hi Hofficers'*” wives ought to have been greatly obliged to her for the omission.

An old lieutenant of one of the English regiments, who had risen from the ranks, and then, retiring from the army altogether, settled at Bangalore, used to afford the cantonment immense amusement. He had several daughters ; and on the occasion of one of them being asked in marriage by a man

whom the father considered beneath her acceptance, he dismissed him with the information that his “daughters should never marry any one lower than a serjeant-major of Dragoons, or an ensign of the *Black Fut*;” the prospective ensign of the *Black Fut* being evidently considered the worse match of the two.

This species of snobbism is commencing by the civilians, who hold themselves high above the military; echoed by the English corps, who look down on the “*Hen Hi*”; and re-echoed by some of the colonels’ and majors’ wives in the *Hen Hi* themselves, until one’s thoughts fly back to the accounts of the dignity balls in the West Indian Islands, where the washerwomen are the ladies, because they cheat the most. Such are the real evils of India, which render the place intolerable to people who have lived in good society at home.

“Rupee” is the name of the highest god they worship; then “rank” for the women, “beauty” for the men, after which they have no more religion. “Good blood” is left out

of the category altogether ; but doubtless some have excellent reasons for dropping the subject.

One day two officers and their wives were dining with my husband and myself. The husband most advanced in years and highest in rank had the youngest wife ; the other lady being a much older woman, and the mother of a family. Being so very quiet a party, my husband thought it best to waive the subject of their relative position in the army, and took the senior lady in to dinner. The next morning arrived a long epistle from the affronted husband of the lady who *ought* to have gone in first, reminding him of the oversight of which he had been guilty, and begging that it might not happen again. Will people in England believe that intimate friends could find a subject of quarrel in such trivial nonsense ?

CHAPTER V.

As travellers in India, once free of the military stations, must bid farewell to hotels and all the other conveniences of civilization, Government has erected at distances of fifteen and twenty miles along the principal roads certain houses for their use, which are dedicated to the enterprising Briton, under the name of “travellers’ bungalows.” These houses are generally built to accommodate four parties at once, and as the order of the day is “first come, first served,” if more than that number make their application for shelter at one time, amusing scenes are the frequent result, and I am afraid, on such occasions, that the ladies, presuming on their sex and the

time-worn motto, “might is right,” too often turn out the hapless bachelors who have comfortably settled themselves long before their arrival, to sleep in the verandah, where it is to be hoped that the glow of conscious virtue which follows a chivalrous action proves better to them than the shelter of walls and roof.

Each bungalow is left under the charge of a Government “peon,” who is bound to provide the travellers with such things as they may think fit to order, and which articles, if desired, he will also cook for them. In this manner, not forgetting the provisions he may choose to carry with him, the British excursionist in India, whether he is journeying for pleasure or business, generally contrives to get over the ground in a very happy, independent, pic-nic sort of style, and to eat the everlasting curry and rice which the peon serves up for his dinner, followed, perhaps, by a dessert of native fruit, purchased at the bungalow door, with considerable relish, and it is to be hoped commensurate gratitude.

The “travellers’ bungalows” cannot be said,

perhaps, to be furnished luxuriously, as the sitting-rooms usually contain one table and a couple of chairs, and many of the bedrooms cannot boast of even a bedstead; but considering that they are provided by Government for the use of the defenders of our country's possessions, the gift is quite as liberal as most things presented us at the hands of that liberal and enlightened body.

Travellers by “transit” usually stop the day at these wayside places, pursuing their journey with nightfall, but those who, not pressed for time, travel with their own horses and servants, stay the day and night too, only accomplishing a short march morning and evening. This is by far the pleasantest mode of progression in India. Every twelve hours sees the traveller transported into new scenery with no more fatigue than he would experience in taking a drive at home, whilst the time selected for moving is the most favourable in which to see the beauties of an eastern land.

We have started so early in the morning on one of these self-imposed marches, that the

dawn had not yet broken ; and as it did so, slowly up-drawing a curtain, as it were, from the jungle outskirts through which we were riding, we have seen the wild deer coming out to browse, all innocent of our vicinity, and the jackal, skulking homewards after his midnight prowl, and even an elephant (but it was “a very little one ”) turning tail and disappearing again into the thick jungle, as he perceived that he had made his *début* at the wrong moment. And driving (or rather, being driven) in an open carriage through the jungle paths at night, our lamps throwing a light upon the surrounding foliage as we proceeded, and making me fancy that I saw the gleam of a tiger’s eyes in every leaf, I have grown so fearful and excited that I have been obliged at last, for the honour of my nerves, to keep my eyes shut, and yet it was an excitement that gave me pleasure.

The most enjoyable journey of the kind that I ever made, was on the second occasion of my travelling from Bangalore to the Neilgherry Hills, when my husband and I were accompanied by Mr. P——, an officer of the

regiment with whom we were on intimate terms.

We took with us one of those vehicles called “buggies,” which sound as though they must be so thoroughly Indian in description, and yet are nothing but a species of very high, light-running gig; three riding horses; a bullock coach for the children and nurses; and several “bandies,” or common native carts, to carry our luggage, which last preceded us to our destination every evening, and were ready unpacked for our use on our arrival. Sometimes we rode on our marches, and sometimes one of the gentlemen drove me, as mentioned above.

P——’s amusement at my imaginary tigers as he piloted me by night through the Bandy-poor jungle, was very great; but although my fears that one might be bold enough to attack us in an open carriage were not realised, the spot is quite sufficiently infested with these brutes to render my alarm natural, if not reasonable. Several times during our sojourn on the hills, instead of receiving our daily supply of bread, we were fain to content

ourselves with a *billet-doux* from the baker instead, intimating, in excuse for its non-appearance, that the “toddy ass” (fermented toddy being used by them instead of yeast) had been carried off by a tiger as he traversed the Bandypoor jungle, and too often the poor cooly who drove him had been sacrificed as well.

P——, however, like most men, thought little of danger until it was close at hand, and professed to think still less than he did, of which he gave us an amusing example during that very journey. On the second night of our having to traverse the jungle paths, I preferred to go in the bullock-coach with my children, and leave the gentlemen to encounter the tigers alone. We were the first to start, however, and therefore were some little way in advance of the buggy, when something went wrong in their harness, and they came to a standstill. P——, therefore, directed his “boy” (as the native men-servants are usually called) to run forward as quickly as he could to catch up to the bullock-coach, and procure assistance to remedy the accident. The differ-

ence of temperature between the plains and the hills being greater than that between the hottest and the coldest days known in England, we had been obliged to fit out our native servants for the occasion with warm cloth coats, made, after their own fashion, to their heels, besides other clothing, some of which had proved rather expensive, and P——’s servant had been turned out by his master in tip-top style. As soon as he had gone P—— quietly remarked, between the puffs of his cigar, as if the idea had just struck him :

“ I wish I had told my boy to take off that new coat before he started.”

“ Why ?” asked my husband.

“ Because he will most likely be carried off by a tiger on the way,” was the cool reply ; “ and then I shall have to buy a new one for the next.”

But though P—— could not resist a joke of this kind, when it urged itself on his acceptance, he was one of the kindest-hearted men and best friends that ever breathed. I may write down his praises

here, since, to our misfortune, he can never blush now to hear them spoken.

Years before the time I speak of, whilst their regiment was quartered at the French Rocks, he had rendered my husband a signal service, no less a one, indeed, than saving his life. We passed the place on our road to the hills, and then I heard the story, which I will give in my husband's words:

“In the middle of the night,” he said, “I was suddenly awakened by the noise of a slight scuffle, and a cry of pain from my little dog, which was fastened just outside my window. I immediately procured a light, and went to see what was the matter, when I found the poor creature gasping for breath, with a large open wound in its chest. I guessed directly that it must have been seized by a cheetah, as one had been seen near my house only a night or two before, and I had shikarees already on the look-out, to see if they could discover where the brute concealed itself by day, so that I might shoot it. Apparently it had pounced on the dog whilst asleep, and tried to carry it off, but, from the resist-

ance of the chain, the teeth had only torn open the chest, and the dog died in a few minutes afterwards. I was vexed at the loss of the animal, as he had not only been given me by a friend, but was also an excellent retriever, and became, therefore, doubly anxious to avenge his death. One day, after having taken me on several fruitless journeys in search of him, my shikarees brought a villager, who declared that he had marked the cheetah down in a small aloe-bush. P—— and I demurred about going at first, as we had been so often taken in ; however, we did not like to lose a chance. When about two miles from the cantonment, we came to the bed of a small river, which contained but little water, and were told by the villager that the cheetah was then asleep in a patch of aloes on the other side of it ; others, however, standing near, declared that the man was telling lies ; and we, therefore, resolved to prove his veracity ourselves. The bushes in which the cheetah was said to be were so thick, and the points of the aloe-leaves so sharp, that it was impossible to force our way through ; thus

we were at a loss how to proceed, until I discovered a small opening through which I could crawl on my hands and knees. I told P—— that I would go in, and that he must be ready to shoot the beast if he came at me; but when I had gained about a yard, I said to him, in a low voice: ‘I think I see him,’ and backed out again; when, just as I had reached the entrance, and was rising to my feet, the cheetah flew at me with a growl, and, springing on my shoulder, knocked me backwards, seizing my arm at the same time in his teeth, and burying his claws in my face. He then left me, and, picking up my gun, I was again upon the point of regaining my feet, when the animal came at me a second time. I then fired, hitting him in the belly, but he succeeded in seizing me by the head, and inflicting a frightful bite behind my ear.

“All this time P—— had been trying to get a shot at him, without hitting me, and as soon as he got an opportunity, pulled first one trigger and then the other, but both barrels missed fire; seeing, however, that matters were so serious, he threw down his gun, and,

being officer of the day, drew his sword, and single-handed, rushed at the beast.

[“N.B. He had no right to be out shooting at all, but the hope of bagging the cheetah had proved too strong a temptation for him, and even our C.O., whilst administering the wagging which necessarily followed the breach of discipline, admitted that there were extenuating circumstances in the case.]

“The cheetah, frightened, I think, at the sight of his red jacket, bolted back into the jungle; the natives having, according to their usual custom, deserted us as soon as they saw the beast’s attack, had unfortunately taken my second gun with them, therefore some delay ensued before we could procure it again, and follow in pursuit.

“Guided by the blood which had dropped from the wounded animal, we tracked him for some little distance, but I became so faint from loss of blood myself, that we were obliged to relinquish the chase, and make the best of our way home; and when we got there, I was so ill that I had to go to bed, have my head shaved, and undergo the daily

pleasure, for a fortnight, of having my wounds touched with caustic, to prevent them from suppurating. The cheetah must have been a very old one, and its teeth consequently blunt, else there is no accounting for their not penetrating my skull, or breaking my arm. The latter was black and blue, however, from the elbow to the wrist, for many a day afterwards, and the marks of the various bites which the brute inflicted on me will remain, I fancy, to remind me of that morning's sport, to my dying day. The natives subsequently tracked the cheetah to its cave, outside which they found a large pool of blood, so I suppose it died after all, although I had not the satisfaction of getting its skin. And if the conscience of the officer of the day had been too well disciplined to permit him to accompany me on my little ‘shikar,’ I certainly should not have had the satisfaction of preserving my own.”

Thus ended the story of my husband's adventure with the cheetah ; and if the brute, instead of dying, survived his shots, I have no doubt he committed worse depredations

before his death. For having once tasted human blood, the feline tribe will not be satisfied with lesser food, though how unnatural the taste must be in them is proved by the fact that a regular “man-eater” is always a mangy diseased brute, whose skin is worth nothing, notwithstanding his lordly nourishment.

There are a great number of tigers about Singapore and the adjacent islands, and sometimes they swim across from the mainland and frighten the residents into fits.

Once whilst I stayed at Penang, a large tigress swam on shore, perfectly exhausted, and had her brains knocked out as she lay panting on the beach. In Singapore the “man-eating” tigers are so numerous, that natives are said to be carried off at the rate of a man a day, and so used have they become to such accidents, that when a Chinese cooly sees a tiger trotting after him, with an evident view to dining, he quietly sits down and resigns himself to his fate.

But I must find my way back to the Bandy-poor jungle.

A very distressing accident had occurred at the bungalow of that name, situated about five and twenty miles from the foot of the Neilgherry Hills, shortly before our arrival, by which the Honourable Captain H——, Aide-de-Camp to the Governor of Madras, lost his life.

It appeared that Captain H——, whilst staying at the bungalow, on a journey to or from the hills, had heard that a large tiger which had done great mischief in the neighbourhood was still lurking in the surrounding jungle. This was grand news for a sportsman, and therefore he lost no time in sallying forth in search of him, and, according to the statements of the natives who accompanied him, found himself at no great distance from his place of starting face to face with this monarch of the Indian forests. The tiger was on one side of a “nullah,” or small stream, and Captain H—— on the other, and it was afterwards ascertained that he had actually fired at the brute thirteen times before it sprung with amazing strength across the area which divided them. Amazing, when it is taken

into consideration that Captain H—— was in general a most successful shot. Seizing upon the unfortunate man before he had time to elude the attack, the brute crushed him so frightfully about the vitals that he was only carried back to the bungalow to die. A doctor was procured for him as soon as it was possible to do so, but nothing could save his life. The tiger, after having accomplished his murderous attack, must have fallen back exhausted and died himself, as he was found on the same spot with the thirteen shots in his carcass.

The strength of these creatures in their dying spring is supposed to be something fabulous. A gentleman, somewhere about this part of the country, had shot a tiger. The natives, who had not dared to go within hail of the brute whilst living, became extremely courageous now that it was dead, and surrounded the carcass in their usual manner, beating it with sticks, and subjecting it to all manner of indignities, whilst they danced about it and sung a song, which interpreted meant that they were the masters, and the tiger was their servant, and that they were

not in the least afraid of him, and he would never rise up again to hurt them. But unfortunately for the prophecy, the gentleman's personal attendant having ventured in his fearlessness too near the prostrate body, the apparently lifeless animal suddenly raised himself, and having, with one blow of his massive paw, laid the presumptuous boaster *dead at his feet*, sunk down again, and this time expired in real earnest.

But here have I arrived at the close of a chapter which was commenced with the intention of giving some account of the journey from Bangalore to the Neilgherry Hills, and I find that my treacherous memory has led me into a rambling discourse upon tigers instead.

Allons! I must try again. Better luck next time.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS time I will be more accurate. Let me premise that the Neilgherries (or “Blue Mountains,” than which no more suitable name for them could be found) are a group of lofty hills in Southern India, which extend thirty-four miles E. to W., by fifteen N. to S., having numerous peaks rising to between five thousand and eight thousand feet. Their route from Bangalore lies through Chinna-patam, famous for its coloured native toys, and Muddoor for its snipe; through ruined and deserted Seringapatam, and its flourishing neighbour, Mysore; through Goondelpett and Sooriapett, and many other native places which, not being famed for anything, are un-

worthy of notice—the last station on the road being Seegoor, which lies at the foot of the “ghaut” up which your conveyances must slowly crawl for eleven miles, along a zigzag path cut in its steep side, before you gain the table-land of Ootacamund, and find that a few hours of travelling have transported you from an atmosphere of one hundred degrees in the shade to one where you may make ice-creams every morning, if you will look very sharp and collect the ice before the sun comes out.

I have travelled a great deal in my lifetime, and witnessed many beautiful sights; but I do not think that I have ever seen anything to compare to the appearance of the Seegoor ghaut, as you stand at the foot looking upwards, preparatory to commencing its ascent.

I cannot describe it: I wish I could; but no pen would be equal to the task: it is a mass of rocky precipices, romantic waterfalls, and lovely eastern vegetation. It is a scene that at first sight almost takes your breath away; that almost reconciles you to India; that causes thoughts of all whom you love at

home to flash through your mind with an earnest wish that they could only see it—that they could only participate in your pleasure and surprise at a sight of which you feel you will never be competent to give them even an idea. The air is so clear, the colouring so vivid, the ascent so precipitous and irregular, and the whole appearance of the ghaut so romantic, that I felt as if I had been suddenly transported to a new world, and became quite excited at the prospect of the journey, and eager to commence it. I am not so enthusiastic about the Neilgherry Hills themselves as I know some of my Indian friends to be; and cannot consider them quite an earthly paradise; but I could live on that ghaut with the people I care for most, and never feel my life, however quiet, to be dull.

The actual ascent, however, proved rather aggravating to an impatient spirit that wanted to “get on.” I performed the feat in the bullock-coach, with four yoke of oxen to pull it, and half a dozen or more natives yelling and pushing at them all the while to keep them up to the mark: yet, strain as they

would, they could only crawl at a snail's pace, and every now and then a dead stoppage on their part, and sometimes an obstinate shove backwards, caused an unpleasant fear that the whole concern might commence to roll down hill again. The path cut in the sides of the ghaut is very narrow, and has no protection on the precipice side except the bushes growing at the edge; and as the depth, on looking down, appears to be interminable, the idea of tumbling over is not a comfortable one. I believe, however, that accidents are of very rare occurrence, although my piano, a Broadwood's square, which had the honour of a “bandy” to itself, very nearly disappeared for ever on the present occasion: the obstinate bullocks which drew it having actually pushed one of the wheels of the cart over the side before they could be persuaded by main force to propel it in a different direction. Since we left the country, also, we have received a humorous account of the complete upset of a gentleman friend whilst making this ascent. He was an amateur photographer, with a great love for the art, and was proceeding to

the hills, with his precious boxes of apparatus and chemicals in the same coach as himself, when at some unlucky turn in the road the path proved too narrow, and the bullocks too frisky, and over went the whole concern, rolling down amongst the bushy sides of the ghaut. Fortunately, and strange to say, no one was seriously hurt, as the coach was stopped in its mad career by the clustering vegetation; but the letter by which we learned the news informed us that the box of chemicals had never recovered the shock, and had not done fizzing yet. My bullocks, however, led me no such games, and after some five or six miles of painfully slow travelling, we arrived at the Kulhutty bungalow, which is situated about the middle of the ghaut, and is a species of half-way house. It was the prettiest little place possible, and would make the most picturesque of sketches, being a tiny cottage consisting of two rooms, with a broad verandah running round them, with a flower-garden in front of it, and a waterfall on one side; buried in vegetation before, and backed by the range of eternal hills behind, whose

points rear up as if to touch the skies, and over which there hangs a cloud of purple haze, which, gradually descending, envelops all creation in a rich bloom. All the Neilgherry scenery reminds one forcibly of Alpine views, both in colouring and character, but especially Kulhutty, which looks more like a bright chromo-lithograph than the tinting of Nature.

At the bungalow one of those scenes occurred to which I have before alluded, and which are annoying at the time, however laughable they may appear on retrospection. The first thing that a traveller in India thinks of on arriving anywhere is procuring a bath. Transit-travelling, especially, is very dusty work, from the awkward shuffle with which the bullocks carry you along; and as soon as we had ordered our dinner, and the bungalow peon had set about cooking it, we took possession of the two rooms—Mr. P.— of one, and ourselves and family of the other—in order to wash and dress ourselves previous to meeting at the dinner-table, which was to be laid in the verandah. But before we had

been many minutes in our sanctuary it was invaded by an Englishwoman in the dress of a lady, who walked in very coolly and took a chair, without apology, in our midst. I immediately represented to her that, by right of precedence, the room was ours, and requested that she would vacate it. But she kept her seat, and steadily refused to do any such thing. My husband then spoke to the bungalow peon, but the man said that he could do nothing; that the lady had come down from Ootacamund that morning with her two brothers (according, it appeared, to the sometime custom of the Ootacamundians) to have a picnic at the Kulhutty bungalow, and there was nowhere else to go to, and they could not return whence they came at once. This was all very well; we had no objection to share the verandah with the damsel-errant, but it was impossible that she could, just at that moment, share our dressing-room. The brothers, who were lubberly boys, had forced themselves, in a very rude and would-be bullying manner, into the other apartment, but had been so summarily ejected thence by Mr.

P—— that they did not care to try it again, and now sat talking together in the verandah —occasionally urged on by their sister to further attempts at forcible entrance, which advice, however, they did not consider it expedient to follow.

However, my husband could not take a lady by the shoulders and turn her out as Mr. P—— had the boys, and therefore, as all argument and persuasion proved useless, as the dinner was rapidly advancing to perfection, and we were neither ready nor likely to be ready at the present rate of progression to sit down to it, we were obliged to have recourse to what has always been allowed to be fair in love or war—stratagem.

The ayahs had already stripped the babies and commenced to wash them, but the lady had turned her back upon the proceeding, and spared her modesty. She affirmed that she had as much right to the room as we had, and that nothing we chose to do should make her vacate it. Addressing her, therefore, I said very quietly: “You are quite mistaken if you imagine that we have any objection to your

remaining here; it was for your own sake that we asked you to leave us, but if you like to stay, you are quite welcome. My husband is just going to bathe; but if you don't mind it, I assure you he doesn't.”

Suiting his actions to my words, my husband immediately sat down in a chair, and pretended to be rapidly undressing. With one glance of mingled horror, wrath, and indignation, the outraged female gave vent to an exclamation of disgust, and bounced out of the room, when we immediately locked the door upon her and proceeded with our toilets. So indignant was she at the *sang-froid* with which we had treated her, that she would not even sit in the verandah, but wandered away on the hills whilst we were at dinner and did not reappear until we had again started on our journey to Ootacamund, where we arrived at eleven o'clock at night, and were received at the hotel with a blazing wood fire, and slept for the first time for many years in a bed guiltless of mosquito curtains, and an atmosphere guiltless of mosquitoes.

No one who has not experienced it can

fully appreciate the horror of going to rest in the plains of India, either without muslin curtains or with curtains with holes in them. The buzzing and biting of a few gnats seem a trifling thing to call a torment, but when it is added to extreme heat and restlessness it becomes an irritation almost too great to be borne.

I know of few things in this wicked world that have made me wish more often that polite society would accord the female sex a few expletives wherewith to let off the steam of its impatience, as the thin, steel-sharpening note of a curtain-imprisoned mosquito (its “tiny trumpet,” as some poet, who has evidently never been bitten by one, endearingly calls it), the author of which eludes all one’s most active endeavours to catch it; the midnight fray usually ending by the admittance of some dozen more, the united attacks of which are followed by a burning and irritating pain, as if the point of a red-hot needle had been inserted in the flesh, and refused to cool.

If the gentleman before alluded to, who

sings so happily of their “tiny trumpets,” could experience a few of their “tiny darts,” I think he would find them capable of inspiring him, though perhaps in an opposite direction, and of making the sucking dove roar.

In their freedom from this torment alone, therefore, the Neilgherry Hills take a high stand, as a pleasant residence, over the plains of Madras; the lowness of the temperature also at night, and during certain hours of the day, renders them invigorating, and to some people healthier, although I have met with many more cases where the hill climate did not agree than where it did. If it was only always cold there, there might be no doubt of its benefit to Europeans, but I was sadly disappointed on arrival to find that the same provoking and un-English system of going out early in the morning and late in the afternoon had to be pursued at Ootacamund as well as at Bangalore. The thermometer is so low, on rising, that the puddles in the road are covered with thin ice, and heavy cloaks and dresses are not only comfortable but necessary; but before nine o’clock the sun

has burst forth in all his glory, and melted one's hope of an English day with the ice on the puddles. Nothing could be more charming than the early stroll, if it were only not necessary to take it quite so early. Ootacamund, which is the principal place there, is built on the banks of a lake, or rather its English residences are built on the sides of the hills which surround the lake, which is large and calm and beautiful, but useless except to look at, as no fish will live in the water. Several attempts have been made to utilize it for this purpose, but without success. A wide carriage road runs right round the lake, which is the favourite morning and evening drive or ride, as it is the only one to be taken without climbing steep hills. The ascent to each house and shop is precipitous, and in some instances quite formidable; and the church sharing this disadvantage with the private residences, and large crinolines being very much in vogue at the time I paid my visit to the hills, it was considered rather a sensation on the part of the gentlemen of the place, to go and watch the ladies toiling up to the

church door, though for what reason was best known to themselves.

The climate is very favourable to the production of flowers, and indeed of all vegetables, and they grow in the most luxuriant profusion in every garden. We occupied a furnished house, called Woodlands, during our residence there, the garden of which was a perfect bower of sweets. The rose-bushes were so full of blossom that they were literally weighed to the earth with the abundance of their flowers; the scarlet geraniums had stems like the trunks of bushes, and were bushes themselves; and two small trees which reached either side of the trellis-work porch of Woodlands proved on inspection to be, one a scented verbena, and the other a fuchsia, which blossomed shortly after we had taken possession, and was a mass of red bells, distinguishable from some distance. Everything appeared to grow and flourish in like manner, and in the grounds of an adjacent hotel we found what appeared like large mounds of heliotrope, but which really consisted of but one plant each, which had increased until it

had obtained the magnitude of a very large rhododendron. And the flowers, wild and cultivated, continue on the hills all the year round ; there is no such thing as potting and preserving and transplanting there ; they have become indigenous to the soil ; and all they ask is to be allowed to bear for ever. There are two other places on the Neilgherries which we have adopted as sanatoriums—Jackatella and Coonoor (I cannot bring myself to call them by their new names), the latter of which I visited once for a few days, but did not care for sufficiently to stay longer. My journey there perhaps was not favourable towards my viewing the place in its best light, added to which it rained the whole time we stayed there. The road to Coonoor at that period was very bad. I had started with my children in the everlasting bullock-coach, and at every second step the bullocks came against what I can scarcely call a stone so much as a diminutive rock, so fearfully did it shake the vehicle and myself. My husband and Mr. P—— were riding on horseback, and when I found that (not being strong) I really couldn't

bear the excessive jolting any longer, I stopped the coach, and, waiting until they came up with me, told them how shaken and bruised I already felt. My husband at once directed me to alight and stay with Mr. P_____, whilst he rode onwards to Coonoor, and sent back my riding horse, which had preceded us.

We ordered the bullock-coach to proceed at once, as the afternoon was well advanced, and the night air of the hills is dangerous for young children; and the babies and ayahs, who appeared to enjoy the jolting rather than otherwise, went on their way, together with my husband, leaving me and our friend alone. We had none of us been to Coonoor before, and were quite ignorant of the route, but we thought the horse would surely arrive for me in the space of an hour, so we sat down by the roadside to wait. It was a lovely scene; the road was too rugged and narrow, and too unprotected on the precipice side, to make one feel comfortable whilst traversing it, but it was all that was most desirable for the study of an artist, and would have made a glorious picture. We sat and discussed its beauties

for a long time, until we found it was growing late, and there were no signs of the return of my husband or the native groom with my horse. The evenings close in on the hills with heavy fogs, which come creeping up from the valleys beneath until they enwrap all objects, and blot out the landmarks, and make the treacherous, precipitous roads very dangerous to travel. Therefore Mr. P—— suggested that we should try to get on a little before it grew dusk, as we should be obliged to go slowly afterwards. Acting upon his advice, I rose up, and accompanied him on foot for some distance, whilst he led his horse; but seeing that I was growing fatigued, he proposed that I should mount the animal and let him walk by my side, which I consented to do; and seated sideways on his saddle, I performed several more miles of our journey. Once we came to a fork in the road, and there was a choice of two paths. We had no idea which led to our destination; but it was no use debating the subject, so we let the horse choose for us, and eventually he proved to have been correct. But the night was begin-

ning to close in, and it became very cold and very dark. For the first reason we dared not stand still; for the second, we hardly dared proceed. But no messenger appeared to be within hailing distance of us, for P—— repeatedly shouted aloud, in case we had taken the wrong turning; but the echo of the surrounding hills was the only answer that we received. Then, notwithstanding that he said nothing, I felt sure that he was getting uneasy; for he led the horse slower and slower in the increasing gloom, and kept on conjuring me to sit steady, and not to be in the least alarmed. But we were as yet unaware that we were even on the right track, and a night spent in wandering about in the Neilgherry Hills on a gentleman's saddle would not have been a very pleasant reminiscence for me, although the presence of the gentleman himself would have been a perfect feast of filberts for certain jaws to crack. However, luckily for my reputation and my health, when we had almost begun to despair that we were on the right road, and the gloom had deepened into a pitch-dark night, we came simulta-

neously upon the lights of Coonoor, twinkling through the fog, and my husband riding in hot haste and vexation to regain us, with my horse in tow, and delighted to find that, notwithstanding the fears we had experienced, we had had the sense to find our own way to Coonoor, without waiting for his return. Owing to some mistake of the native servant, the horse had not been heard of at the hotel to which he had been directed to take it, and my husband had been searching about the place for it in vain. However, all's well that ends well, and as we were none the worse for our adventure, we began to think it had been rather a pleasant one than otherwise; it appeared, however, upon further knowledge, that I had ridden for seven miles on Mr. P——'s saddle; and I am sure, on retrospection, that it seemed twice as long. However, the road and the rain combined did not impress me favourably with regard to Coonoor, and as there was still less to be done there than at Ootacamund, I was not sorry to return to our previous station.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Ootacamundians (by which I mean not so much the temporary visitors to the hills as those Europeans who have settled there) have two great and noble objects in life. One is, to climb every morning the little acclivity at the summit of which a waving flag denotes the situation of the post-office, in order to obtain their letters before (according to the postal regulations) they have any right to do so; the other, to walk down every Tuesday to the market-place, which is near the native town, and lay in a stock of cabbages, carrots, and potatoes, to last them for the ensuing week.

To witness these periodical raids forms

rather a curious study for the uninitiated, and to watch the eagerness with which white pith solar “topees” (as hats are called out there by our degenerate tongues) and plaid coats and trousers (many of them formed of native cloth, and some in gorgeous checks of red and green), all shove and push together as they seize their newspapers, or bargain for their vegetables, is good if not edifying. The struggle over, however, the letters received, or the assurance that no letters are forthcoming obtained, the pith topees and plaid trousers calm themselves, and condescend to engage one another in conversation, or even to run their eyes over the missives lying on the counter for less eager correspondents, and to wonder who that individual can be who writes so often to Mrs. So-and-So, in such a bold, free hand; and whether the envelope for Captain Such-a-One, which is addressed in so suspiciously tradesmanlike a caligraphy, contains a dun from Madras or not. The Ootacamundians are great at politics, and pass away many a pleasant half-hour on the Post-office Hill, wrangling and arguing, and ending off

by a general grumble, in which all ranks are agreed, at the blunder called Government.

Hither trip the unmarried ladies of the place also, demanding their letters, or their mamma's letters, with many a becoming blush and smile; and as it is as convenient a spot as any for a quiet flirtation, and no one can be blamed for wishing to have news of their absent friends, I am not sure that the unmarried ladies do unwisely.

When the post has come in, the excitement of the day is over for most people in Ootacamund, except on the happy Tuesdays aforesaid. There is no band there to play in the evenings and collect the company together; but there are plenty of sequestered rides and walks, and appointments are easily made, therefore it is not to be supposed that no one enjoys himself after eleven o'clock in the morning; in fact, the Neilgherry Hills are very much like 'board ship': few enjoy them who have not the amusement of making love to fall back upon, and to such Hades itself would probably not be uncomfortably warm. It is a grand place for courtship (Ootacamund

I mean, not Hades), and many a young man who goes up there for six months or a year on sick-leave, comes down with perhaps a worse burthen in the shape of a wife, for which the only consolation is, what can't be cured must be—the other thing.

There are always plenty of females on the hills, consequently the hills are dangerous to an idle man. There are the wives who *can't* live with their husbands in the plains; the “grass-widows” (or widows put out to grass), as they are vulgarly termed; and as *won't* might very often be read for *can't*, perhaps they are (without any reference to the amount of their charms) the most dangerous that the idle young man could encounter. Then there are the young ladies whose parents are not able, or not willing, to send to England just yet, but who are too old to live with safety in the heat of Madras; and as the hill air is favourable to the freshest and most glowing complexions, perhaps an anxious mother might desire safer companions for her ardent young gentleman to ride and flirt with for months together (after having seen none but

orange-coloured females for years), than some of the owners of the pretty faces which I have seen galloping round the lake at Ootacamund. And lastly, there are the mothers themselves, with their troops of little ones, for whose health, perhaps, they have consented to separate from their lords and masters; or wives who have accompanied their husbands thither, and who watch each change in the countenances of the invalids with a painful anxiety, as if they would peer into the future, and read whether the trip is to end in restoration to health and duty, sick-leave to England, or a funeral at twelve hours' notice. Were it not for the reason that the hills are too often sought as a sanatorium alone, when people are too languid or too much concerned about themselves to have inclination to explore their beauties as they deserve, Nature should have sufficient attractions there to pass away the time for everybody. I have said before how very like the mountainous scenery is to Switzerland, and I was particularly struck with the truth of the comparison at Ootacamund.

The grass-grown gently-undulating earth,

terminating in a back-ground of steep ascent; the dark fir-trees, standing out in bold relief against a sunset sky of rainbow colours; the tiny mountain torrents met at every turn; the fissures in the overhanging eminences sprouting with wild flowers, and the roads planted on either side with avenues of trees, no less than the grand calm lake lying in the very bosom of the cantonment—all combine to give it the appearance I have indicated.

Perhaps one of the most curious situations which the Neilgherries afford a stranger, is to stand on the brow of some of the hills, looking down the ghaut towards the plains, and to see the clouds beneath his feet: the very clouds to which he may have ignorantly raised his eyes whilst below, and imagined heaven was somewhere just above them, hovering like a mass of snow or down, or another range of hills more lovely than those he stands on, between himself and the lower earth. The original owners of the Neilgherry Hills are a native tribe called “ Todahs,” who still live on the outskirts of the European settlements; but as their history has already been published,

I could say nothing of it here, but what I had cribbed from others. Specimens of the people themselves, however, I have had several opportunities of witnessing, as they often came round to the various houses to sell honey and buffaloes' milk, their chief resources proceeding from the possession of large herds of buffaloes, which form almost all their wealth and substance. I believe Government pays them something annually in exchange for the forcible possession of their birthright; and, if such is really the case, it deserves to be universally recorded as one of the rare instances of the English Government giving away anything that it was not absolutely obliged to do. The Todahs are a remarkably fine-looking race, particularly for that end of the world. Both men and women are tall and strong, with handsome features; the crisply-curled beards of the former, and the long hair, hanging in curls to the waist, of the latter, combined with the aquiline noses of both sexes, reminding one forcibly of the pictures still extant of the Assyrians. The Todah religion (I suppose they have some

sort of religion) would appear to encourage the doctrine of no mercy on the female sex, as it permits a plurality of husbands, and some of the unfortunate women have any number of lords over them, varying from twelve to twenty. When it is taken into consideration that the huts they live in are simply thatched mounds of earth, with holes so small for entrance that they have to crawl in on all-fours, and that being a wife in India means, added to all other duties, cooking a man's dinner for him, the onerous nature of such a law may be faintly imagined.

The Todahs' huts are so full of vermin that, when my husband's shooting-party has been caught in one of the hill storms, he has found that his common native coolies (not over particular themselves) have preferred lying out in the soaking rain to accepting the shelter they might afford them; fancy, then, any unfortunate woman trying to cook eighteen or twenty dinners to suit eighteen or twenty different tastes and tempers (not improved perhaps by the ventilation) in such an atmosphere, moral and physical, as a Todah hut

may present under the circumstances. It is a type, however, of the degrading state into which uncultivated minds must sink, that the number of husbands which she has, does not depend on a Todah woman but on the men themselves. When she is once married, the next offer is made to the husband, and if No. 2 has sufficient buffaloes to make his proposal desirable, he is accepted. Lover No. 3 is then chosen by ballot, and so on to No 20. If all the old husbands are not agreed as to the admittance of a new one to the honour of their lady's smiles, the connection is not feasible. Marriage, therefore, degenerates with them into a species of partnership, and they share their possessions in every sense of the word.

The issue of these marriages are very few and far between : indeed a baby is so rare an article now amongst the Todahs, that they consider it quite a curiosity ; and when we were on the hills they actually brought one round the cantonment as a show, and expected money from those who looked at it. It was a jolly, fat, little, black-eyed girl, but really not

very wonderful as a sight for European eyes. Fancy an Englishwoman coming to that pass that she considered a baby a curiosity! I am afraid that some few of them would be very thankful if they saw the sight less often than they do. With the Todahs have fortunately disappeared the wild animals from the English hill stations, and like them they only visit the settlers occasionally for a treat. Every here and there, where the dip of the clustering acclivities makes a tiny valley, is a little grove of trees and bushes, called in Indian parlance a “sholah,” and cheetahs and even tigers may be seen of an evening, skulking from one sholah to another over the brow of the hills; but if sport is desired, a man must put many miles between himself and his temporary residence, although, occasionally and by chance, a shot may be obtained near Ootacamund.

Some years ago, two ladies who were paying a visit there returned from an evening stroll which they had taken together along the borders of the lake in a state of the greatest alarm. One was in hysterics, and

the other couldn't speak. But when they were at last restored to something like reason, they had a horrible tale to relate, namely, that they had seen the devil. He had encountered them as they were coming home in the dusk; they were quite sure of his identity; they could not be mistaken, as he stood up directly he saw them and displayed his horns and his tail. No arguments or persuasion could shake their conviction that they had seen the old gentleman himself; and the friend who related the story to me, having been called in as their doctor to try and quiet them, said that they were both so positive on the subject that at last he almost began to believe it himself. However, the next evening, as he walked along the spot—a very lonely one—where they had been frightened, trying to think of a reason for their alarm, a dark figure suddenly reared up in the hedge before him, just as the ladies had described, and then resuming its normal attitude of all-fours, shambled hurriedly away in the shape of a large black bear, which probably, being unable to find water

in his sholah, the season having been unusually dry, had ventured down in the evening to drink at the lake, and now ran back again as fast as he could, almost as frightened at the appearance of the meditative doctor as the ladies had been the night before at his. The gentleman who told me this story did so on the occasion of warning me that a panther had been seen lurking about the brushwood at the back of the cottage which I then inhabited, and which news made me almost as great a coward as the heroines of his tale. That was, however, at the time of my first visit to Ootacamund, three years before the period I now write of. Every month in India, almost, makes a difference in dispersing and annihilating the beasts of prey of the soil. I expected to become as familiar with snakes in the East as I had been with earthworms in England ; to find cobra-capellas twisting themselves round my body while seated at dinner, only to be dislodged thence by the “tune of slow music ;” and asps comfortably entwining my arm like bracelets, not to be dislodged at all, but by some wonderful feat

of skill ; but although I never put myself out of the way either to seek or avoid them, I never happened to fall in with a snake in India in a wild state (I saw plenty in the snake-house at the Botanical Gardens, at Madras) except once, and that was when I was summoned to see one of the commoner species which lay dead in the compound, choked with a squirrel in its throat, which it had attempted to swallow whole, and deservedly died of.

My husband once had a funny adventure with some bears, of which I should heartily have liked to have been a spectator. He was out shooting at Comerabundah, a place between Masulipatam and Secunderabad, with another officer of the name of B—. Their “shikaree” reported that he had seen three beasts on a hill about two miles from where they were ; so they settled to start at about three o’clock the next morning, so as to be quietly ensconced near their dens before they returned from their night’s feed. After a tremendous climb up a rocky hill, they arrived at the place where the bears were said to sleep, and

they had little doubt of the accuracy of the statement, from the abominable smell which the brutes had left behind them.

They took up their position behind a rising rock, and had not long to wait, for just as it was getting light they perceived three bears making straight for the cave in Indian file. My husband whispered to his friend that he would take the first himself, and B—— should fire at the second; and accordingly both guns went off at the same moment, hitting their mark.

Bruin No. 1 immediately turned and attacked No. 2, imagining, I presume, that he was the cause of his injury; and No. 2, with a growl, rushed at No. 3, and all the bears went rolling and fighting and growling together, in one mass of black fur, down the steep hill, whilst my husband and B—— looked on, and could do nothing else for laughing.

At length, the third bear, which had not been wounded, and which was doubtless very much puzzled to guess what all the fuss was about, disengaged himself from the embraces

of his companions, and retreated down the side of the hill; the other two contrived alternately to bite one another, and their own paws (which bears invariably do when hard hit), until the men reloaded their guns and finished them off. They told me that they tried to eat some steaks off one of these bears, but, though the flesh looked uncommonly like beef, they couldn't manage it. They brought me the skins, however, and two large bottles of genuine bear's grease; which, though certainly purer than most pomatum, I do not believe to be more efficacious for the preservation of the hair than mutton-fat or a tallow-candle. The bear-skins, however, of which the fur is long and straight and intensely black, made a very handsome rug, which I have in daily use up to the present moment, although all the care of one of the best furriers in London was powerless totally to eradicate from it the strong odour for which these animals are famous.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was a very general complaint in India, when I knew it, that the country, with regard to its hospitality, was not what it used to be. Old fellows, with the native cloth trousers, before immortalized, sticking close to their legs—(how fashionable they would appear now-a-days! but I daresay they have just gone into peg-tops)—would splutter and fume with indignation as they related how, “when I was a boy, sir,” utter strangers were received by everybody with open arms, and requested only to live upon them for the term of their natural lives—which, interpreted, means that, in the old times, an English face was not only rarer and more welcome than it

is at the present, but also that the aborigines under the rule of John Company had a larger quantity of curry and rice wherewith to regale their friends; and strangers, just arrived in a country then but little known, and which possessed no hotels, were doubtless thankful to accept any hospitality which was offered them.

My father and mother were in Madras for a short time about the year 1826, and whilst at a large public ball the latter found herself seated next to a stout “party,” dressed in what Mackney would call a “magnolious” costume of gaudy satin, but with whom she was utterly unacquainted. Refreshments were being handed round between the dances, and as the fat lady heard my mother decline to take macaroons, or something equally sticky, she turned and addressed her in the following friendly style: “Lor! my dear! do try some of them kickshaws; I warrant you’ll find they’ll stick to your ribs!”

This speech emanated from the lips of a Major’s wife, and a person who, as my mother afterwards ascertained, was influential in

Madras. If the regretted hospitality was generally extended by such, thank Heaven! for the sake of my countrymen and women who remain in India, that it has passed away with the “good old days!” Not that I agree with the owners of the red and green plaid trousers, that it has entirely vanished: open, unquestioning entertainment for man and beast is an impracticable virtue in a country which is being daily reinforced by employés from every grade of society; but the system of extending cordial and generous invitations to the friends who have any claim upon you is not yet abolished in the Madras Presidency, nor, I believe, in either of the three. In fact, in several instances, we have met with so much uncalled-for kindness from our fellow-countrymen, that it is impossible to remember their names or places of residence without feeling the greatest gratitude for the alleviation which their friendship proved to a life of exile. As my husband, then quite a lad, stood where he had been landed on the Madras beach, on the occasion of his first visit to India, without a friend to receive him, and

ignorant of what to do or where to go, a gentleman, seeing that he was a stranger, stepped up to him, and asked if he intended staying with any one in Madras. On his replying in the negative, he gave him an invitation to his house—took him home then and there—and showed him the greatest kindness until he left for the cadets' quarters at Palaveram. This was certainly a remnant of the old-fashioned hospitality, without any of its drawbacks, and it is a circumstance which will never be forgotten by the recipient.

There was a certain house at Mysore, the owner of which possessed one of those large hearts that must be for ever giving; and as that was a pleasure which everybody seemed ready to indulge him in, the “Red Lion” (as his residence came to be called) was generally full of guests. Our acquaintance with him commenced by an act of hospitality on his part. During the first year of my residence in India we visited the hills, and the sudden change proving too much for the constitution of our child, who was quite an infant, she was attacked by that fatal complaint, dysentery,

and we hurried down again to Bangalore. On our way, however, she grew worse, and, at the Mysore bungalow we were obliged to call in medical aid in the person of the gentleman I speak of—Dr. C——, durbar surgeon to the Rajah of Mysore. As soon as he saw the child, he pronounced her not fit to travel, took us all home to his house, and kept us there for three weeks, during which time he not only loaded us with kindness, but, by his care and attention, saved the life of the child. From that time we were only too pleased when an opportunity offered to become his guests again, and, as we returned from the Neilgherries after the visit in question, we stopped at Mysore, and spent some weeks beneath the roof of the “Red Lion.”

I suppose no establishment was ever conducted with a greater view to the entire comfort of its guests. The house was large and beautifully furnished, for every Governor and Commander-in-Chief, as he went to and returned from his annual holiday, halted at Mysore as the guest of Dr. C——, and his rooms were fitted up in a style worthy of their

occupants. All along the back of the broad carpeted verandah were disposed settees and couches, whilst the front part was occupied by various little tables and chairs, where the ladies staying in the house might at any hour call for tea or other refreshments, and the gentlemen enjoy their cigars, newspapers, and “brandy-pawnee” at the same time. The breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners which were daily spread were more like tables-d’hote than private meals, and the watchword of the whole establishment was “Liberty.”

Dr. C—— was a great patron of the turf. He had at that time upwards of sixty race-horses in his stables, and has owned some of the best racers that India has produced, and the great object of the morning’s ride or drive was to go to the racecourse and see the horses take their gallop. For this purpose it was necessary to pass through the native town, or bazaar, of Mysore. Never having been in Bengal, the independence of these natives struck me as very great. The fat old Brahmins used to squat at their open doors, pointing at and making remarks upon us, as

we slowly drove through the narrow streets ; their ponderous shoulders and breasts glistening with the oil wherewith they had rubbed themselves, and their round uncovered stomachs presenting a tempting target for rifle practice.

Once, when I was alone in the carriage and there was a slight stoppage on account of a crowd, the men of the bazaar actually surrounded the vehicle, thrusting their impudent faces right inside the open windows, grinning and jabbering like a set of monkeys, and touching my clothes with their hands. I became quite frightened at last, but I was at their mercy, as the horses could not proceed, and the native coachman could not understand English. So I was compelled to sit quiet, looking as dignified as I could under the circumstances. But it appeared, on inquiry, that it was only the “way” of the Mysore natives, and nothing to be alarmed at. They had wished to look at the English female, and so they had done it. Being under the rule of the Rajah, they are naturally, like the men of Hyderabad, less careful of pleasing the Euro-

peans than the natives of other places; and their independence is said to be occasionally the source of great inconvenience to the English residents.

The Rajah is a well-meaning old fellow, with a real respect for the English government, but he is very silly and bigoted; quite under the thumb of his Brahmin priests, and robbed by them to any extent. The “cow” is everything in the Mysore territory, and in consequence, no bullock is allowed to be killed within several miles of the city; the difficulty of procuring beef, therefore, is very great.

On one occasion, when the Rajah fell sick, his priests persuaded him that if he had a silver cow made the size of life, with a door in its side, and sat in it whilst they recited prayers over him, that he would recover, provided he presented the silver cow to them afterwards; which advice he actually followed to the letter, and imagined that it expedited his cure.

The Rajah of Mysore was in the habit of taking violent fancies to people. At the

period I write of, he had just done so to a man of the name of H——, who had started a circus in Madras, and exhibited it at several places, Mysore included. The Rajah was enchanted with the horse-riding, fell in love with the tricks of the elephant, and forthwith engaged H——, at some high salary, to enter his service, and train his stud and elephants in the same manner.

He had an amphitheatre built for him in the palace, from the back of which his wives could, through curtains, watch the performances, and his delight was to order them to take place almost every evening, whilst his courtiers and he looked on and wondered. Shortly before, the circus-master's daughter had married a Madras clerk, and the gifts of the infatuated Rajah on the occasion were said to have been magnificent. He had furnished a house for the reception of the bride; he had sent for a carriage from England expressly for her benefit, and he had loaded her with presents. He still had great faith in H——, and permitted him to do as he chose with his stables; but prosperity ap-

peared to have made the man careless with regard to training both the riders and the horses, for his circus was scarcely worth looking at, the native riders quietly practising most of their feats of horsemanship in the sawdust, and the performing elephants and ponies requiring to be whipped and shrieked at before they would exhibit their tricks, and often ending by flatly refusing to do anything at all.

Yet, by all accounts, it could not have been a bad thing to be a favourite of the Rajah of Mysore. We saw a good deal of him whilst we were staying with Dr. C——. The children of Lord H——, the Governor of Madras, whose grandfather was at the taking of Seringapatam, were also in the house, and the Rajah wished to show them attention for their father's sake. First of all, he paid them a visit, when we all received him in state in the drawing-room; after which the whole party paid him two visits at the palace, one in the morning, when he held a levée; the other in the evening, when H——'s circus was exhibited for our gratification.

The Rajah is a little shrivelled-up man, but nice-looking and gentlemanly withal ; dresses in cloth trousers and shining leather boots, and wears a long cloth coat of native cut over them, with a single row of Brahminee beads across his breast. These beads are carved and scented ; and supposed to have been blessed by the old rogues whose name they bear ; and they were the only ornaments, except a few rings, that the Rajah wore. His head, which I suppose is shaved, was covered by a plain dark-coloured turban. He was very quiet and affable in his way of talking, and reported to be very timid. A story which I heard of this trait in his character tickled my fancy exceedingly. He keeps a species of menagerie in his stables, and had, amongst other animals, a large Bengal tiger, which lived in a cage. One day, through some carelessness of the keeper, the tiger escaped from his prison, and being well fed, and consequently charitably disposed towards mankind, walked very quietly through the native town and going up on the ramparts, lay down comfortably in the sunshine, and

blinked his eyes. He had attempted harm to no man, but the mere fact of his being loose was sufficient to set the native population in an uproar. They flew hither and thither, gesticulating and chattering like a set of apes with a snake thrown in their midst; and the most frightened of the lot was the old Rajah himself. As soon as he heard that the Bengal tiger was stalking about Mysore, seeking whom he might devour, he flew to the topmost storey of his palace, had the door of the room barricaded, and refused to emerge thence for any of the purposes of life. As the day went on, however, the poor, lazy, fat old tiger was discovered taking his cosy nap on the ramparts, and it was proposed to convey his cage up there, and see if he would re-enter it of his own accord. Who amongst that chicken-hearted race was brave enough to bell the cat I did not hear, but he deserved a medal for being so unlike his countrymen. Anyhow, the cage was conveyed to the ramparts, and when the sun went down, and the air became chilly, the dear old beast got up, and walked into his

usual resting-place, like a lamb, and was doubtless conveyed back to the stables with shouts of triumph from the brave Mysorians.

But all this while the poor old Rajah was still shaking with fright up at the top of his palace. The news, however, of the animal's capture was quickly conveyed to him, when having ascertained that it was the blessed truth, he condescended to vacate his place of ambush and reappear in his usual apartment, where he was surrounded by his own people, all eager to tell him of the trick by which the tiger had been retaken, and to hear him join his wonder to theirs that no injury had been done. But their astonishment at the tiger's harmlessness sunk into nothing before the surprise with which they heard their chief (by whom they had expected to be blessed for their dexterity) calmly affirm, in answer to their calls upon his gratitude, that the behaviour of the tiger as a “ ticket-of-leave man ” was only just what he had expected.

“ He could not have hurt you,” was the apparently unconcerned reply, “ because I had shut his mouth by my prayers !”

CHAPTER IX.

THE palace is situated in the Fort, and is surrounded by dirty huts and shops. It is a tawdry, mis-shapen building, the front of which is painted in the most glaring colours, giving it the appearance of a large Punch and Judy show, or a travelling caravan, or anything but a king's dwelling. It stands rather back from the other houses on a square of unoccupied ground, on either side of which was drawn up a line of caparisoned elephants which, at a sign from their mahouts, as the royal carriages drew up at the palace door, first knelt down, and then throwing their trunks over their heads, gave vent to a snort, which is intended as a salute, and was really

very impressive on account of its being done simultaneously. If, however, the residence of the Rajah of Mysore is unlike all pre-conceived ideas of a palace outside, it is still less so in. As we dismounted from the carriages we found ourselves in a species of badly-lighted and ill-ventilated stable, two small cows being littered down in the entrance hall. Mounting the dark stone steps, and stumbling as we went, a flight of pigeons came flying down from some upper storey right in our faces. On the first landing we encountered another cow and more litter, until I almost expected to find the Rajah himself seated on a dunghill for a chair of state. In the antechamber to the reception-room, however, we saw a cow that I could not quarrel with, however inappropriate her position appeared to European taste. She was the Rajah's sacred cow, and was kept in a kind of dry tank sunk in the middle of the room for her convenience. She was of the Brahmin breed, milk-white, and not larger than a goat. The little wretch had gold bangles half way up her legs. She was covered with a cloth of gold; her hoofs were

gilt, and her horns were tipped with the precious metal. I asked her attendant if she had ever calved ; and to my surprise he said that she had done so twice. I had thought she would have been held too sacred ; but they want to preserve the breed. The man said that her calves were both alive, and that when born they were no larger than kids. Brahminee bulls of the size of this cow are very common, and not of much value ; it is a usual thing to see them dragging about children's carriages in India, like the goats on Brighton Esplanade ; but so small a cow is a great rarity, and her unblemished colour added to her worth.

We found the old Rajah in his reception-chamber, which is a large, long room, at one end of which a few chairs were placed for himself and his guests. He received us all very graciously, and seating little G——H—— on the chair next his own, commenced talking with the child through the medium of Dr. C——, in a manner which I thought very interesting. He told him how his great-grandfather had been commander-in-chief of

the British forces in India at the time of the storming of Seringapatam in 1799, and how he had been created first baron of Seringapatam and Mysore in consequence. He said that, at that period, he was nothing himself but a poor little native boy, whom his mother, terrified at the advance of the enemy, had hidden, lest he should be found by the English and killed. He related how the commander-in-chief, then General H——, instituted a search for a successor to Tippoo Sahib, and having found the little boy in a native hut, took him thence, and set him on the throne of Mysore. The old Rajah in telling his story acknowledged so frankly how entirely he was indebted to the generosity of the English for being alive, far more, regnant; and spoke with such apparent candour of his admiration for them, individually and as a nation, that no European could stand by and listen to him without liking the old man, particularly as the national character must have made each one of us feel that, had cases been reversed, we should not have been quite so ready to make a public acknowledgment of

gratitude for receiving at a conqueror's hands what was our own by right of birth.

I dare say a great deal of his speech was policy, and a little of it fudge; but it was addressed to a child of about four or five years old; and there were no spectators of any great influential standing. Therefore I liked to think it true, and have always had a kindly remembrance of the old Rajah in consequence.

His usual conduct, too, bears out his assertions, for his kindness to the European officers who have appointments about Mysore is said to be uniform. His reception-chamber was hung with a great many oil-paintings, chiefly portraits of the gentlemen in the Mysore commission and of the Queen and Prince Albert; for the execution of which (notwithstanding that they were wretched daubs) he had paid high prices. The largest specimen amongst them, which represented a review of troops by her Majesty, was evidently a great favourite, and a subject for his intense admiration. I asked the old gentleman if he would not like to go to England, and see such things for himself? His answer, interpreted by Dr. C—

was, that he was too old to care much about seeing England ; but that he should greatly like to see the Queen herself : he thought, if he could do that, he would be quite satisfied ; and I wished that the poor old fellow could, though I am afraid that he would find himself sadly out of place, set down in the midst of this bustling, buzzing, never-ceasing hum of busy men.

Of course the entertainment would not have been complete without a nautch, and the Rajah's “ pets of the ballet ” were commanded to appear for that purpose. So much that is contradictory has been written about nautches, and I have seen so little of them, compared to many other people, that my opinion here, perhaps, may not be of much worth ; but I cannot help remarking upon the many incorrect statements which have appeared concerning them. Like many other things in India, they have been turned into stock for literary trade, and so represented that they are difficult of recognition by such as have really witnessed them.

I have before me now a book entitled “The Hunting-Grounds of the Old World,” by the

“old Shekarry,” at page 112 of which, speaking of a Hyderabad nautch, the “old Shekarry” thus expresses himself:

“Gentle reader, have you ever visited the Land of the Sun? If so, you too must have marked that languid expressive voluptuousness issuing forth from the gazelle-like eyes of her daughters which you seek for in vain in less favoured lands. You, too, may have been captivated by some one of the many fair maidens of Hind: and perhaps as you have gazed intensely into the depths of her dark and ever-changing eyes, which sparkling with their brightness lovingly refracted back your own, you have felt they spoke a language your heart has well understood; and, perhaps, at such a time, as you have gently put away those thick jet-black and glossy tresses from her fair brow, you have whispered softly in her ear: ‘Mera jan, tera waste mera dil panee ho gia’—(My life! on account of you, my heart has become water); and when her fond expressive glance has met your gaze, and she has twined her snow-white arms around your neck, you have ‘ta’en her answer from her

murmuring lips,’ and felt as you pressed her delicate and yielding form the closer to your bosom, that e’en the much lauded beauty of your own loved, though far distant, land was cold and tame compared to hers.”

Now this style of writing sounds very pretty and very delightful; but it is just the species of doctored romance to which I have alluded in a former chapter, and to which Indian writers of all others seem to be peculiarly prone. What the “old Shekarry” can possibly mean by speaking of the “fair” brows and “snow-white” arms of an Indian girl it is difficult to say, or to account for, except on the ground that he had been inhaling too much of the “fragrant narcotic” mentioned in his preceding page, and which caused such a “strange delightfully ravishing sensation to steal gently over his senses.”

Not that he is the only writer who has worked up the idea of the eastern nautches into a subject of romance. Others have affirmed that they are graceful and beautiful exhibitions; but, on the other hand, I could quote opinions which dubbed them uninterest-

ing and inelegant; but, were I called upon for a decision in the matter, I think that clinging to the truth, as it appeared to me, I should steer between the two. I do not consider them uninteresting, but neither could I apply the term beautiful, which means so much to the performers or the performances. Many of the girls have graceful, lissom figures, and many of the poses into which they fling themselves are studies, but the whole affair is meretricious. Every look they throw from their dark eyes, as well as every attitude into which they twist their flimsily-draped forms, is done with the sole view of appealing to the senses of the spectators, and I believe, on credible authority, that even men are far more often disgusted than pleased with such exhibitions.

Our evening visit to the Rajah, which was paid the same day, was chiefly occupied by viewing H——’s circus, in watching which he appeared to derive quite as much gratification as did Lord H——’s little children. And that was the last time that I saw the old Rajah of Mysore.

CHAPTER X.

WE paid several visits to the Rajah's stud before we left, and on one occasion the best horses were all led out for our inspection, with their state saddles on. These last were really beautiful, of European manufacture, and studded, as well as the reins and head-pieces, with gold and jewels. Each horse had a coloured silk cloth bound about one of his fore-legs ; the reason of which I could not comprehend. They were very handsome creatures, but the Rajah thought nothing of them in comparison with his stud horse, for which he had such an infatuation that he was spoiling his whole breed for the sake of him. He was a bay Arab ; very low in the body,

and long in the neck, with a natural saddle, so deep that it completely spoilt his shape, and made him look as though he were deformed: however, he was all that was perfect in the Rajah's eyes, and the more foals he could procure disfigured by natural saddles the better he was pleased.

Many animals besides horses were kept in the royal stables, which are numerous, and built on three sides of a quadrangle enclosing a large piece of ground.

There was a pair of milk-white asses, very handsome and rare; some “neil-ghye,” or blue cows, graceful, soft-eyed creatures, of a bright slate colour; and several rhinoceroses, one of which had killed two or three keepers in succession, and another had a clumsy little calf, about the size of a large pig, the only specimen bred in confinement.

Besides these, there were some hunting leopards, used for running down deer; several cages of monkeys, and a large quantity of elephants: one hundred and thirty, I believe, being the number then kept by the Rajah.

Of these, one was very well trained, and

performed several tricks which he had been taught, not by H——, the circus master, but by his mahout.

He stood up and lay down as desired, lifted the man on to his back with his trunk, and, what was more extraordinary, upon being given a small bottle of oil, and the keeper's black baby, commenced to part the child's thick hair as if his trunk had been a tail-comb, and then carefully to lubricate the division made, by dropping the oil along it, and rubbing it in with the same useful member.

While staying at Mysore, on our road up to the hills, we had seen a large male elephant, which had been just captured, brought into the cantonment between the eight trained female elephants that had assisted in taking him, and which now walked, four on either side, armed with heavy chains, with which they continually lashed the flanks of their prisoner, whilst he stalked along, with an expression on his face, as he would exclaim, with the injured lover in “Luisa Miller:” “Ah ! mia tradia, ah ! mia tradia.”

When we visited the Rajah's stud, eight

months afterwards, we saw the same animal, but so changed as to be scarcely recognizable. When he had marched in, fresh from the jungle, he had been a splendid fellow, of eight feet high, and massive in his proportions, and had required all the flagellations of his clever lady captors to keep him in anything like order ; now—although, perhaps, looking taller, on account of the fact that his huge bones were painfully apparent beneath his skin, he had no signs of splendour left in him. His mournful eyes were haggard, bloodshot, and suppurating, as were also cruel wounds, made by the chains which encircled his neck and legs, and which had been riveted on so tightly at first that they had eaten into the poor animal's flesh, and then, when forcibly removed and fastened higher up the joint, had left jagged festering sores behind them. It gave us such pain to look at this noble creature reduced to such an abject condition, that the memory of his altered appearance haunted us. The manner in which elephants are captured —being enticed from their jungle by the call of the female elephants, trained for the pur-

pose, into an enclosure, where their captors gradually encircle them nearer and nearer until they are fairly trapped—is well known ; but the mode by which the natives break the spirit of their huge prisoners is not, perhaps, so familiar. When first caught, and chained by all four legs to the ground, the wild elephant naturally rebels—refuses to eat—and, if not subdued, would fret himself to death. The method of training him therefore (as it is called), is never to permit him to sleep. As long as the beast shows any signs of rebellion he is not allowed to close his weary eyes. Relays of natives dance round him all night, flashing torches before his bewildered sight, and shouting a song into his bewildered ears, the refrain of which is :

“ You must submit to the Rajah,
You must submit to the Rajah ; ”

and the usual upshot of which is that the poor animal, being too full of jungle life to die, and driven nearly stupid by sights and sounds such as his jungle life never brought to him, ends by submission : that is to say, he abandons hopeless efforts to root up his chains and

trample those who approach him under his feet ; and, worn out by pain and want of rest and quiet, consents to eat as much food as will support life in him, and remains for the rest of the day with down-hanging head and bloodshot despairing eyes, sadly wondering how this great change has come upon him.

But they assured us that, in a few months, the elephant I allude to would forget his past, pluck up heart and appetite again, and, with it, recover his good looks, and, it is to be hoped, his happiness.

Before we left Mysore we paid a visit to Seringapatam, which is not far off. It is a miserable, deserted-looking place. There scarcely seemed a human creature left in the town. As we rode through the bazaar the shops and houses were all empty, trade was at a standstill, and the only human beings we saw were a few beggars. The fort is still standing, with the huge breaches made in it every here and there by the English shells ; and the spot where Tippoo Sahib fell was pointed out to us by our native cicerone. The only

thing worth visiting in the place is the mausoleum in which are buried Tippoo Sahib, his father, Hyder Ally, and his wife. The three slabs of black marble which cover their remains are placed side by side, and, when we saw them, were bestrewn with pink rose-leaves, which had a very pretty effect. The mausoleum which shelters the graves, and which is built very much in the fashion of a small temple, stands in an enclosed garden, which is entered by iron gates—the only thing left in Seringapatam which looks as if anybody cared if it went to decay or not.

I am now going to take you by this pen-and-ink route to Burmah, *via* Madras; and as, in the natural course of such a journey, the travellers must halt for a little time at Bangalore, I should like to take this opportunity of saying a few more words about that place, which escaped my memory whilst it lingered there.

I always found that those places in the East which pleased me most, were such as had no pretensions to imitate my native land, and that away in the jungle, or amongst the least fre-

quented parts of the cantonments, where nothing which struck the eye provoked an unfavourable comparison, but all was thoroughly in keeping with the customs of the country to which it belonged, I was able to enjoy and interest myself as I ever failed to do in the more civilized quarters. There was just such a drive in Bangalore—one which led by a large tank through the “monkey-tope” and “pettah” to the fort which we took, in 1799, and which is now garrisoned by European and native troops.

A “monkey-tope” means a monkey-grove : the “pettah,” the native town ; but it is to the former I wish to allude.

The English children in Bangalore used constantly to petition to be driven out to the “tope,” to feed the monkeys with bread ; and it was certainly a most curious sight to drive quietly along this road of an evening.

As soon as the last English house had been left behind, the jungle-bushes rose up gradually on each side of the hedge which skirted the thoroughfare, until it was thick grove everywhere, and the larger trees met overhead and

interlacing their branches, formed a leafy avenue for some distance.

When I drove out for the purpose of feeding the monkeys and watching their gambols, this was the spot where the carriage was brought to a standstill. I would look all round me and neither see nor hear signs of any living thing, except perhaps the whirr of beetles and grasshoppers, enjoying themselves in the hedges. Then I would direct the horsekeeper who accompanied me (and which long-enduring individual had run on foot behind the vehicle the whole way from cantonment) to call the monkeys in his native tongue. Advancing to the front, and looking very much (in his blue-and-white turban, blue coat and short white breeches) like a big monkey just hopped off an organ himself, he would call to the brutes in the Tamil tongue, “Bah! bah!” (Come! come!) and after a few seconds the effect would be magical.

Peering through the leafy branches would be seen one grinning face after another, and then, reassured by the voice and appearance of their own countryman, the monkeys would

drop silently from bough to bough, until a whole colony of them stood in the main road, surrounding the carriage and waiting eagerly to see what I had brought for them.

Thus viewed, they formed a wonderful subject for speculative thought. I have seen the place covered with them, from the old grey-beard, which had seen, perhaps, a dozen or more summers, to the baby-monkey, which had just left its mother's arms.

Regarding them as a whole, as a colony or nation, they were just like human creatures. There were the mothers, holding their young in their arms and suckling them at their breasts; and, with the exception that they will occasionally fly after their enemies right over a hedge, or up a tree, regardless of the terrified looks of the little pink-faced creatures that cling round their waists all the time, they behave much as other mothers do. Then, there were the old gentlemen of the party—the “Father Abrahams,” as we used irreverently to term them, who cultivated white bristles and showed all their teeth, and growled when they felt themselves insulted. I used to

carry bread and fruit for these brutes, and when I threw a piece amongst the crowd, if a young monkey got it he was sure to be pursued by a “Father Abraham” and bitten, until, with a horrid squeak he relinquished his prize. This coarse injustice used vastly to excite my indignation, and my greatest triumph was, when having by dint of much coaxing and many a tempting bait, induced a “Father Abraham” to approach within reach of my driving-whip, I was enabled to give him the lash as he deserved. With one bound he would fly beyond reach and remain there, shaking and growling with rage, as he showed all his teeth and longed for the revenge he dared not attempt.

There was one monkey in the Bangalore tope which used quite to frighten me by her audacity in trying to snatch the bread out of my hands. One day she took off the whole loaf as I was about to break it, and, I have no doubt had a fine feast, as she was quite able to hold her own. She was a mother, which perhaps accounts for her boldness; but more than once she laid hold of a piece of my dress, and

swung herself into the carriage, almost on to my lap, and she was such a formidable-looking creature that I was afraid to refuse her anything. She had had her upper lip bitten off, I suppose in fight, which had left all her teeth exposed, and gave her a most savage appearance.

To see the mother monkeys box their little ones' ears, and the “Father Abrahams” cuff the younger fry and even the ladies—for they do not appear to exercise much gallantry in their intercourse with the fair sex—was a most amusing sight, and one over which I have spent many a half-hour.

When no bread was in question to distract their attention, the younger monkeys would assemble by the roadside and play games with one another. I declare I have seen them play leap-frog, though, perhaps, they do not call it by that name, and look quite as pretty and as cunning as little native children as they did so, and as for hide-and-seek they are as familiar with it as we are.

In the “pettah,” monkeys were almost as numerous as in the “tope,” and made them-

selves twice as unpleasant. The lower class of Hindoos worship this animal as the representative of their god Hannimann, and therefore they dared not interfere with them. They ran all over the roofs of the houses and shops just as they pleased, gibbering and chattering at the passers-by; and the native women, who kept fruit-stalls in the bazaar, were obliged to sit over them with a stick to ward off the thieving brutes. If one man bears a grudge to another and thirsts for revenge, all he has to do is to scatter a little rice over the roof of his enemy's house, when off come all the tiles by the hands of his god's representatives in their eager desire to get at the grains, whilst the unfortunate owner is prevented by his religion from doing more than look on and pray that the grave of the mother of his betrayer may be defiled.

Thus, although perhaps monkeys are more interesting at a distance than in the capacity of bosom-friends, and few people would find pleasure in doing more than drive through a dirty native town, there is so much that is curious and strange to be learned from watch-

ing the habits and customs of any foreign creatures when they are really by themselves, that it was a relief to me sometimes to get away for a little while from the hybrid cantonment—from that place which was English, and yet not English, Indian, and yet not Indian—and see something which, if not exactly in accordance with my own tastes, was at least real and genuine.

CHAPTER XI.

I BELIEVE that the journey from Bangalore to Madras (two hundred miles as the crow flies) may now be entirely performed by train ; but I knew the road under two aspects only—one, when the whole distance had to be traversed by horse or bullock transit ; the other, when the railway was established no farther than Vellore. I have had occasion before now to allude to the subject of travelling by “ transit,” and the term is probably familiar enough in England, though few here can realize the full horror of such a mode of progression.

The transit-coach itself is a species of small omnibus on two or four wheels, built in a clumsy ramshackle style with very indifferent

springs, which is disagreeably palpable as it commences its jolting, thumping, bumping journey over the irregular country roads. On opening the door no seats present themselves to view, but a flat surface raised to the height where seats should be, upon which the traveller must place his mattress and pillows, and creeping in on all fours the best way he can, lie down at once, as if he was in his bed. A window on either side of the vehicle, as well as one at the door, are sufficient for the purposes of ventilation, but as it is not considered prudent to sleep in the night air of India, some of them at least are generally closed, when the “transit” becomes abominably close and stuffy.

The first start is usually made late in the evening, so that the ground may be well traversed by the next morning. If the transit is drawn by horses, the bumping is very much worse than with bullocks ; indeed, I have known it to be so violent, that I have been quite unable to keep myself from being thrown backwards and forwards from one side of the coach to the other.

The scenes which occur at the various stations where they stop to change horses would be most amusing, were it not for the tortures to which the poor animals are subjected before they will permit themselves to be harnessed. Most of the horses kept for the purpose are wild, unbroken creatures, and the variety of expedients to which the natives are reduced, not only to get them between the shafts, but to make them start when there, are innumerable, and that most cruel of persuasives, the “twitch,” has often to be applied before the unruly brutes can be induced to behave themselves. What with the flashing lights, the shouting natives, the rearing horses, and the maltreated transit-coach, the comedy sometimes half threatens to turn into a tragedy; but the final result of the experiments is always the same. With a parting howl from the men and a plunge from the transit, the frightened animals bolt away like mad things into the darkness, whilst the crazy old vehicle to which they are attached goes banging and jolting and jerking after them, making them rush forward with each fresh rattle that it

gives. It is of no use calling out to the driver that he is shaking the life out of you ; he cannot hear, and if he heard, he cannot understand ; and if he understood, he cannot obey ; for he has as little control over his beasts as the unfortunate human jelly inside the transit has over him. So there is nothing to be done but for Jelly to lie down amongst the pillows, and try to keep his body as steady as it is possible to do, until the bungalow is gained, and the first stage of his journey over.

I travelled once thus by horse transit, and was actually so bruised that I would never attempt it again, although it is of course a great saving in respect of time. The bullock-transits are certainly easier, they swing along on their two wheels at a quiet jog-trot ; but otherwise they are not more satisfactory. The native owners are apt not to provide the best of beasts for the purpose, and when there had been a demand for such conveyances, we were liable, on arriving at a station, to have the jaded, fagged bullocks which had just been released from the transit preceding our own, taken from the sheds where they had been

fondly deluding themselves that they were littered down for the night, and clapped panting between our shafts. This is the worst situation of all, for native drivers have no pity, and will harass the poor creatures into going until they drop. Under one poor bullock in my transit, which thus lay down from sheer exhaustion, the human brutes lit a fire to force it to stagger to its feet again. It was so far spent, however, that not even the dread of further cruelty could give it artificial strength, and after a little while they were compelled to leave it by the wayside and make a native take its place to hold up the pole whilst the coach proceeded at a walking pace.

As the mode of occupying a transit is to lie down, and the time of travelling is at night, ladies are not expected to emerge thence in the fullest costume, and a dressing-gown and loosened hair is the usual style of dress. But notwithstanding that the custom is well known, and almost obligatory, it is really a serious trial of fortitude, on arriving the next morning at the destined bungalow, to have to

crawl out again, either head or heels foremost, in the presence, perhaps, of one or more strangers already located there, who come into the verandah to see who are the fresh arrivals.

If the railway were not beginning to scribble all over the map of India with its iron style, and consequently to erase “transits” with a dash, I should think it worth while to put in a word of entreaty here to the bachelors of Madras, that, when they see one with a lady occupant draw up before the verandah in which they are seated, they should have a little mercy, and make themselves scarce until the unfortunate traveller has had time to enter the bungalow and hide herself. *They* may not mind being unearthed in shirt and sleeping-drawers in view of the other sex; but they should have some consideration for the very inelegant way by which alone the ladies can “exit” (as poor Artemus Ward would have said) from a transit-coach. It is positively paralyzing to the female organization, when roused by the sudden stoppage of the vehicle before the bungalow door and the in-

junctions of her fellow-travellers to make haste and alight, to find that she has not only to scramble to the ground, like a Todah woman coming out of her hut, but that, when she has accomplished the feat, she is submitted to the scrutiny of a stranger's eyes with unwashed face and tumbled hair, and in her very oldest and ugliest robe-de-chambre.

And yet how many pleasant events can I remember which took place at those wayside bungalows! With how much merriment have their whitewashed walls re-echoed; and how many people have become fast friends for life whose first acquaintance arose from such an accidental meeting! As I recall them, one by one, there rises up before me a vision of Ooscottah, where some gentleman to this day unknown sent me with his compliments a dish of stewed snipe and green peas for breakfast, which were as good as he was kind; of Palmanair, where an officer to whom a friend of ours had lost some money at cards at Bangalore, followed him post-haste, and dragged him out of his transit to take his revenge at a

most unholy hour in the morning ; of a bungalow on the road to Secunderabad, under the porch of which the natives of the village were in the habit of wheeling, in a kind of rude chair, a most frightful deformity in the shape of man, and leaving him there until the occupants of the place could stand the sight no longer, and were obliged to give them money to cart him away again ; and of Muddoor, on the Mysore side, where an officious old lady, located in another room of the bungalow, seized hold of one of my teething babies and was about to lance its gums, and who said, in excuse when she was prevented doing so, that she thought my husband was a poor young widower travelling alone with his children, and that it would be a kindness to do it for him ; but considering that she was a widow, the attention was suspicious.

Whilst on the hills I met with a young Englishwoman called Mrs. D—, the widow of a sergeant in an European corps. She told me that at the time they came to India there were two sergeants of the name of D— in the regiment, one of whom (not her husband)

died on the passage out; and when the troops were landed at Madras, the information of his death was sent to head-quarters. Their destination was Bangalore, and they marched there by slow stages. When within a few miles of the place, as they were halting for the last time, a detachment of one of the other regiments in Bangalore marched out with their band to play them into the cantonment—a compliment usually paid to troops in India. Mrs. D—— was seated at breakfast with her husband on this occasion, when a fine handsome sergeant armed with a large bouquet of flowers and some fruit, popped his head into the tent, and having introduced himself made his little offering to Mrs. D—— and sat down with them. He had not been there many minutes, however, when another non-commissioned officer bigger and better than the first, and carrying a basket of fresh butter and eggs, also entered, and having, notwithstanding the frowns of his comrade, presented his gifts to Mrs. D—— (who was a very pretty woman), and seen them most graciously accepted, took a seat likewise. Mrs. D—— and

her husband hardly knew what to make of their new friends; they appeared so very eager to make themselves agreeable; but they both agreed in thinking them the most hospitable and sociable of strangers they had ever come across, and that if every one in India was as kind and anxious to ingratiate themselves, the country must be a Paradise.

In the course of conversation, however, Sergeant D—— happened to speak of his wife.

“Oh! you’re a married man, then,” observed one of the strangers, apparently relieved by the news.

“Of course I am,” replied the husband; “why, there she is.”

“*That* your wife!” exclaimed the first man, with intense surprise; “the devil!” whilst the face of the other presented a mixture of chagrin and disappointment.

“Why, we heard you had died coming over,” was the rapid explanation.

“We thought you were the other D——.” And then their vexation melted away in shouts of laughter.

“There are four others coming to meet you with presents.”

“You’ll have enough butter to last you for a week.”

“You’ll be able to smother yourself in flowers, Mrs. D——, if you like.”

“But why—how—what is the reason of it?” exclaimed both husband and wife, still mystified by the incident.

Then it all came out; the reports that Sergeant D—— had a very pretty wife, and that Sergeant D—— had died on the voyage out, had become jumbled up together in the non-commissioned officers’ quarters at Bangalore; the result of which was that Mrs. D—— had had some half-dozen aspirants for the honour of her hand before she knew what their intentions were, or was in a position to accept any of them.

The two suitors above-mentioned having got over their disappointment, entered heartily into the joke of deceiving their rivals, and the whole party sat out quietly the visitations of some four or five other men, all of whom appeared laden with some offering or other

for the supposed widow of Sergeant D——, whose good looks had preceded her to Bangalore. But at the last, when the grand explanation was given, it all passed off, she told me, very amicably.

“I’m very sorry for your sakes that I ain’t dead,” said Sergeant D——, jocosely, “but as I’m alive, and I can’t help it, suppose we make the best of a bad job and all have a good breakfast together?”

But Mrs. D—— said that the six suitors were a joke against her and themselves as long as she continued in the regiment. The Madras road, however, has sadder memories attached to it than the love disappointments of a few soldiers.

Some years ago a party of ladies and gentlemen started in transits to go from Madras to Bangalore. They were not related to one another, but journeyed together for the sake of company and protection. The party consisted of Mrs. S——, her mother, and little son, of two young ladies, the Misses B——, just arrived from England and about to join their parents up-country, and a Captain R——

who had put himself to some inconvenience in altering the time of his journey that he might be of use to his friends on the road. They travelled in perfect safety until they reached a certain bungalow, I forget which, but not more than a couple of stages from their destination. Here, as they were again about to start, they all insisted (against the entreaties of the old lady, Mrs. S——'s mother) in drinking water from the “bowrie,” or well, in the compound; an act which is at all times considered so unsafe to do, that no transit travellers are unprovided with soda-water and beer wherewith to prevent the necessity of such an imprudence.

However, in this case the transits were already packed, or the travelling party was unusually careless; anyway, they all with the exception of Mrs. S——'s mother, drank some of the bungalow water before they proceeded on their way. But they were almost immediately attacked by cholera, and the only survivor amongst them was the only one who had been prudent. Mrs. S—— and her little child died in the transit before it reached

Bangalore; and a post-mortem examination proved that their insides had been actually burned away as if by the action of a rapid poison; either one or both of the poor girls who were anticipating a happy meeting with their family also perished, and so did Captain R——, who was on his road to rejoin his wife and children. Whether the bungalow water had been rendered thus noxious by the decomposition of the surrounding vegetation, or whether poison had been mixed in what they drank by the natives, will never be ascertained; but knowing what I do of the eastern character, I should never feel satisfied, when losing friends in so mysterious a manner, that they had not been murdered. The natives are in possession of several medical secrets which the English faculty in India have tried in vain to wrest from them. Servants whose employers linger on the Neilgherry Hills, after it is their own desire to return to the plains, have been known to wash the cups and plates from which their master's children take their food, in so subtle a juice or distillation that everything they took disagreed with them,

until the parents, laying the effects to the mountain climate, have hastened back to the place where the natives would be.

An “amah” also, or native wet-nurse, offended by some word or action of her mistress, will revenge herself by causing her milk to dry up, or “backen,” as it is technically termed, in a few hours, and what is more extraordinary, will, when perhaps in possession of the dismissal she coveted, bring the draught back again almost as quickly.

“Just look at that woman,” a doctor said to me, in reference to a similar case at Madras; “she has done, with apparently the greatest ease, what we English would give anything to know, how to quickly disperse a mother’s milk without risking an injury to her system; and though I’ve tried every means by which to find out their method, they won’t disclose it.”

I may remark here, however, though it is rather irrelevant to the subject in hand, that the native cows which are mostly diminutive and unproductive brutes, not giving more than a couple of tumblers morning and even-

ing, have the most wonderful faculty for retaining their milk until they chose to give it down. Some of them will appear on the calf being taken away from them, not to have a drop in their udders, but directly the attempt to procure any is given over in despair and the calf is permitted to return to them, they prove to have had their usual quantity stowed away somewhere. This is very clever, though at times inconvenient, and one can scarcely blame the maternal instinct of the animal which prompts her to retain all her milk for the little one for whose use it was given her : but it is not so easy to feel amiable towards a reasoning creature who undertakes to perform the part of mother towards a helpless infant, and will then deprive it of its nourishment without the least regard to its health, in order to gratify her own caprice. I have known several cases in India, where English children have been lost from the desertion, or constant change, of their “amah ;” and my only wonder is that Englishwomen can ever prefer the use of them to that of a cow.

Whilst my husband's regiment was quartered at Madras, a detachment of an European corps, which was sent there by train from Vellore, was attacked with cholera on the way from some similar act of carelessness to that I have related, and the scene which presented itself as the train-carriages drew up at the Madras station and were opened, is said to have been heart-rending. I heard the story from an officer who was on the spot, and he said, that to see the poor soldiers, some of them staggering under the weight of the dying or dead bodies of their wives or children (for several of them had died on the journey), or at death's door themselves as they feebly attempted to leave the carriages, was the most dreadful sight he thought he had ever witnessed.

Our own regiment happened to be the first that ever used the railway from Vellore to Madras; indeed, it was not opened at the time of our removal from Bangalore, but a special train was experimentally run for our benefit, which fortunately did not blow up. I expected that the natives who accompanied us

would have been all astonishment at their first experience of the marvellous power of steam.

An educated Englishman, who had lived all his life (if such a thing could be) so far in the country that he had never travelled by railway, or seen the electric telegraph work, to say nothing of the wonders of machinery ; never watched a balloon rise in the air, or heard of the Atlantic cable ; would be so thunder-struck at his first view of these things, that he would have no words whereabouts to express his delight and astonishment. But a more ignorant mind, having less capability of forming an adequate idea of how much mental strength is needed before such inventions can be brought into working force, would feel less surprise that they had been so brought, and by men like himself. And the native intellect having sunk, by the non-education of generations past, into a lower and more degraded state than it would be possible for an European to attain, felt still less, and expressed still less, at their first sight of a railway train than even I had given them credit for doing.

“ Well! what do you think of the train, Ayah ?” I said to one of the nurses who was sitting opposite to me with a baby on her knee, as we were rushing through the air at a rate at which *she* had certainly never travelled before. “ Isn’t it very wonderful ? How do you imagine they make the train go on ?”

She shrugged her shoulders and looked as unconcerned as the infant she held in her arms.

“ How I telling ?” she replied, when I pressed her for an answer. “ English people catch fire-devil, and shut him up in box.”

“ But how do you think we caught him ?” I persisted.

“ How I telling ?” she reiterated, with another shrug. “ English people very clever ; can do everything.”

And with that assurance she rested perfectly content, and never expressed a wish to know any more about it from that day forward.

CHAPTER XII.

MADRAS is a place of which there is little to be said, and still less to be written. It is like a characterless person, of whom, when hard pressed for an opinion, it is almost impossible to give an adequate description. Some time or other during our lives we have all been placed in similar predicaments. What is such-a-one like? demands an interested inquirer, and we pause and hold parley with ourselves as to the manner of answer we shall give, particularly if the questioner is one who will be offended at the truth. “ Is she pretty?” “ Well!” (drawled out) “ not exactly pretty, but—rather, perhaps, she has what is called a pleasing face.”

“Is she clever?” “Hum—I really can hardly say—well! I dare say she is—*moderately* so.”

“Is she well bred?” “I *believe* so; I don’t think I ever observed anything to the contrary,” and so on, and so on, through the whole catechism to which we are subjected. And that is just like Madras.

“Is it a cheerful place?” “Pretty well.”

“Plenty of society?” “Yes, that is, there are plenty of people there.”

“Good houses?” “Tolerably so.”

“Every convenience?” “Yes, so far as there *can* be,” and the only question concerning it to which a real, hearty, determined answer can be given is:

“Is it hot?” to which may be emphatically replied, “Uncommonly so.”

Our regiment was stationed at Perambore, an offshoot of Madras, as Kensington is of London, though it is blasphemy against my native country to name the two in one breath. It is about four miles from the town itself, to which we drove every evening. It is composed of a certain number of staring white

houses standing shelterless beneath the fierce Indian sun, or, at best, with their “compounds” garnished with a few barren trees covered with red dust, and occupying a square of shrivelled-up brown grass. The interior as well as the exterior of every bungalow in India is the same, which used to sicken me of trying to decorate any of them, for what is the use of trying to make “household gods” out of articles fac-similes of which you may see next door, if you choose to enter it.

Every compound is laid out exactly in the same manner and entered by the same white pillars, built up of brick and plaster, which have never had a gate to bless themselves with. Every house has the stereotyped number of windows blinded with green venetians, and the same glass-doors standing open and leading straight into the sitting-room, without any hall. Every drawing-room is covered with Javanese or Indian matting, has half a dozen doors leading from it to other apartments, with half doors attached to them covered with turkey-red cotton cloth, and can

boast of a round table, a sofa, a piano, and other etceteras, with walls washed with either pale pink or green, which comes off upon everything which touches it. No favourite pictures hanging round the room; no cosy spring-stuffed armchairs; no soft carpets in which to lose one's footfall—above all, no mantelpiece! no fire-place; no dear old English poker and tongs, wherewith to vehemently attack the coals whenever one has just got the worst of an argument and feels in the humour to punch somebody else's head.

During the dry season, which lasts for nine months, the roads of Madras are simply layers of thick red dust, which settles upon everything, and spoils everything it settles upon. This dust was the most distinguishing feature of Perambore, indeed the only thing for which it may be said to be famous, if I except a Hindoo burying-ground, in which, according to that religion, the corpses used to be burned, and from which, when the breeze set in our way, the smell was more powerful than refreshing. We know that there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, but the

manner in which some of these burnt-sacrifices are carried out would seem as if those who conducted the rites had cleared the sublime at a standing jump. It appears that the nature of “cold corpusses” when subjected to the action of heat, is, in consequence of the sudden contraction of the muscles, to sit up; so it often, indeed generally, happens that papa, or grandpapa (as the case may be), refuses to be a good boy and be burnt up quietly, but will insist upon rearing himself upon the funeral pyre and watching the proceedings of his own immolation. So that the sorrowing sons and grandsons go to the funeral armed with “shillelahs,” and as soon as the remains of the old gentleman give the least hint of rising they attack him from all quarters, in the fashion of Donnybrook Fair, and keep up a continuous “thwacking,” until their progenitor is open to reason, and permits himself to be consumed in a decent and orderly manner.

The drive from Perambore to Madras lies through a series of close and dusty streets and dirty “bazaars,” the smell of which at times was so dreadful that we were obliged to hold

our noses, the atmosphere being at the same time so close that we appeared to be passing through the dry heat of an oven. Of course the route was always the same. First, through narrow streets of houses, chiefly inhabited by half-castes, on the flat roofs of which, hybrid damsels, invariably arrayed in white book-muslin with coral ornaments and black velvet in their hair, might be seen, ready to interchange glances with, and cast down billets-doux upon the officers as they rode to and from the band. Next, through a native quarter, where we were liable to be solicited for alms by ladies and gentlemen covered with small-pox, leprosy, and other disgusting diseases; where we saw droves of those nice, clean-feeding, healthy-looking Madras pigs which turn one's blood to water, and put a sudden death to any wonder we may have hitherto entertained as to the reason Jews are commanded under the Levitical law to abstain from the flesh of swine; where we generally also met a Hindoo corpse or two being carried to their burial; a sight which was scarcely more pleasant than decent to contemplate.

At one time, whilst we were quartered at Madras, the cholera made great ravages amongst the lower classes of the natives, and I have seen as many as twelve or fifteen corpses carried past in one evening! Fancy an old native, dead, and clothed in exactly the same suit in which he entered the world, placed upon a wicker bier much too short for him, so that his legs have to be violently bent at the knees; his bones nearly through his skin; his brown shrivelled face striped with white and yellow paint, the marks of his caste; his black hair dyed the colour of carrots with saffron; a wreath of large scarlet flowers round his head; his mouth forced wide open by the generosity of his friends, who have stuffed it so full of betel-nut and “paun” leaves, that they are all sticking out in a bunch; and his unclosed sunken eyes appearing as though they mournfully contemplated what a hideous figure his relations had made him look like! Yet the sight is by no means an uncommon one for ladies in India.

The town of Madras once gained, the prospect certainly improves. The principal road

is wide, and planted with trees on either side ; it has some very fair hotels, a good club, and several French and English shops, which, if they are first-rate in their goods, are also first-rate in their prices.

There was a linendraper settled there for some years, of whose insolence several stories used to be told. He commenced his career in Madras as a barber and hairdresser, and in that capacity was often sent for to shave the heads of people in fever. But he was such a coward, and so afraid of infection, that he positively refused to attend some patients who had infectious disorders. An officer who knew of this, sent one day for him to go and cut his hair, and received him in bed. After he had been in his presence for some time, the hairdresser asked the gentleman why he was confined to his room ?

“Oh ! don’t you know ?” was the reply, “I’m sickening for the small-pox.”

With one spring, the frightened man dropped his scissors and his combs, and making a dash for the door, attempted an immediate flight. But the young officer was not going to be

baulked of his joke, so leaping out of bed, he caught the hairdresser before he had passed the threshold, and the man's terror was so great, and his struggles to escape so vehement, that it ended in the two actually rolling on the floor together.

The officer had had his fun, and I believe the poor barber endured weeks of agonized suspense before he learned the truth of the practical joke which had been played upon him, and nearly frightened himself into the disease, to the infection of which he thought he had been subjected. But his impertinence was so great that he well deserved such a practical joke. A gentleman one day asking him for an umbrella, he loftily replied : “Don't keep 'em, sir ! *my* customers all drive.” After which I am sorry to have to relate that he made a fortune, and retired to settle in England. Certainly, the Madras shopkeepers ought to realize more than a competency, considering the profits which they acquire. The price asked for some of their trash is incredible ; still more incredible is it to me, looking backward, that any one should be found foolish

enough to give it. A slender gold chain, in my possession, with an ornament attached to it, composed of four opals and a small emerald, and purchased of the principal European jeweller there, cost fifteen guineas, and is probably worth about five ; an ordinary papier-maché blotting-book, with a gaudy bouquet of flowers painted on one side, was paid five pounds for, and a common linsey-wolsey dress, which was half cotton, and purchased by me for wearing on the hills, cost, when made up with scarcely any trimming, the same sum.

But Europeans in India never seem to remember that a rupee is two shillings ; they always calculate it as one, and if an article would cost five shillings or thereabouts at home, they do not hesitate to pay six or seven rupees for it in India. “ Remember,” they argue, “ it has had to travel a long way before it comes to us.” At one time we were in the constant habit of consuming a tin of Cambridge sausages for breakfast. It professed to hold a pound of sausages, but I suppose the case was included in the weight, as there were never more than five, and the price of them

was four rupees, eight annas a tin: I should like to hear anybody ask me nine shillings a pound for sausages now—Cambridge or otherwise. Ah! if we could only recall, not the money we have *spent*, but that which we have literally *thrown away*, what a nice little fortune it would be!

The Government House, in the centre of Madras, is a big forlorn-looking place, with damp marks all over its walls, standing in a forlorn-looking park, under the trees of which some forlorn-looking antelopes are pointed out to the new-comer, as something to look at. There is a square of grass, surrounded by trees, near Government House, which is used for reviews, and called the “Island,” because the ground on which it stands, and which is of triangular form, is washed on two sides by the river Combe, and on the third by the sea; the said river Combe being, doubtless, the identical one addressed by Mrs. Southey in the words of her song, as “River, river, rapid river,” has by this time all “dashed down into the sea,” and left nothing but a very sluggish stream behind it. This, daily retiring

for a space from off its bed of mud, leaves a smell to which that of old Father Thames is as *Ess. Bouquet.*

On the other side of the island stands St. George's Fort, and on this part of the beach takes place the nightly gathering, which constitutes “going to the band.” It is the most sensible band-place that Madras could have, for the beach is the only spot where it is possible to get a little fresh air. Even there sometimes, although it is always cooler than in the cantonment, there is not the ghost of a breeze, and to keep still, sitting in a carriage, is to require the use of a fan. Of course, if I wished to “pad” these papers I could find a great many other things to tell of Madras, but they have all been described before, and probably by writers who liked the place so much better than I did, that it would be a pity to disturb the pleasant illusions which their eloquence may have left behind it.

Then there are the Botanical Gardens, where the band plays once a week, and the Government Museum, which also boasts a menagerie of “wild beastesses,” and Guindy,

the country-seat of the reigning governor; and the Adyar, where all the swells live; and the Black Town, where all the smells live—to say nothing of the People’s Park, founded by that “man and brother,” Sir —— ——; and Popham’s Broadway, in riding through which he picked up and kissed a native baby to show his philanthropy, commonly reported to have been a female baby of about fifteen years of age.

This is the same gentleman who, by way of propitiating them, issued invitations to a lot of natives to attend an “At Home” at Government House, to which until then none but the English residents had ever been invited. So that the Europeans who were present on the occasion had the pleasure in some instances, of recognizing in the grimy mass the faces of their own tradespeople. Adding insult to which injury Sir —— —— walked down to supper, lovingly linked arm-in-arm with some black fellow who professed to be a rajah’s son, leaving the Englishwomen, who had honoured him with their presence, to find what cavaliers they could, and follow as they

might. I am glad to think, however, that whilst the unanimous decision arrived at by the gentlemen was, that as far as they were concerned Sir ——— was welcome for the future to fill his rooms with no complexions but such as Nature had blackleaded, his lady-guests agreed, with one voice, that they preferred any cavalier to himself.

We were slowly roasted in Perambore for the space of nine months, during which time we attended a great many parties at Government House, and heard too many sad volleys fired over the graves in St. Mary's Cemetery; but I am not aware on what ground the period lays any claim to be considered a profitable one, unless it is that at the end of it everybody was free to consider himself nine months nearer home.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR WALTER SCOTT (if my memory does not deceive me), in one of the letters published with his life, asks his daughter-in-law, the wife of his soldier son, if she has yet realized the truth of the following verse :

“ Oh! but I’m weary with wandering,
Oh! but I’m weary and sad ;
It befits not a gentle young lady,
To follow a soldier lad.”

I am sure, if he had lived to make my acquaintance, and to put the same question to me, at the commencement of the year 1857, when our regiment was suddenly ordered off from Madras on foreign service, I should have answered him *Yes*, in the most emphatic of italics. The late war in China had just broken

out, and the left wing of the regiment was under orders for Hong Kong, whilst one of Green's passenger-vessels was taken up to convey the head-quarters to Rangoon. So that, added to the confusion of embarking some hundreds of men with all their goods and chattels, was the task of attempting to stem the tears of the “grass-widows” left behind, and to make arrangements for the sale of such furniture as we could not take with us. My husband being at the time quarter-master of the regiment, and unable to attend to anybody but the Sepoys at the moment of embarkation, I was compelled to go on board the Agincourt the night beforehand, and a more uncomfortable position can scarcely be imagined than the one I was placed in for twelve hours before he was able to join me. I was the proud possessor of two babies and two native nurses, but the latter went down howling with seasickness as soon as they touched the deck, and left the former completely on my hands. The beds had not come on board, and so we had nothing to sleep on, neither could we get at the little luggage we required, and none of

the ship's company would help us. The Agincourt, although at anchor, kept up an incessant heavy roll, which was far worse to bear than the motion of any sailing, and in the midst of my nausea and surrounding discomfort, I could not procure even a glass of water to drink. Shut up in my stifling little cabin, and diffident of stirring out of it because of my being an utter stranger to the officers on board, I could yet distinctly hear them at their dinner in the cuddy close to me, and the jingle of the ice in their glasses made me wild with longing. But to all my entreaties to the steward to come and help me, or to give me at least something to drink, I received but one reply —that the captain was on shore, and the orders given were, that the victualling of the regiment was not to commence until the following morning. Very proper discipline, no doubt, but much more proper than pleasant in my eyes, and I don't think either the captain or the steward slept any the better for my blessing that night. With the break of morning, however, the boats commenced to come off from shore with detachments of the regi-

ment, and although I had passed the night sleeping on the floor, with a carpet-bag for a pillow, and cockroaches coursing all over me, and had to welcome them with an unwashed face, my troubles (so far as they *can* be over on board ship) were over for the nonce, and I was satisfied.

From that moment the Agincourt set sail with a fair wind for Rangoon, and the fortnight's voyage passed as quickly as monotony could make it go.

At first we really thought we should have no greater excitement provided us than what we derived from watching the unhappy fowls, which were packed so closely in the coops along the side of the deck that they had no room to turn round, quietly eating one another day by day! To see them select a victim, more submissive than the rest, and deliberately set to work to devour him alive, was a sight to shudder at, and make one quite afraid to go forward. The remembrance, also, did not brighten our enjoyment of the roast fowls which appeared so constantly at table, and which we could not help fancying, whatever

the reality, had been pecked to death before our eyes.

But before long, circumstances arose which were quite as distressing as seeing fowls mutilate one another, and far more serious. The major and adjutant of our regiment had chosen to place their chargers in well-padded horse-boxes on the deck, instead of lowering them into the hold, thinking, as some animals suffer very much from sea-sickness, that the fresh breezes would suit them better than the close air below. For the first few days they behaved well enough, but after that time the adjutant's horse, a fiery little grey Arab, growing weary I suppose of his confined quarters, became restive, and took to kicking, and his bad example was followed by the major's, which was a powerful black Cape horse.

Commencing by inciting one another on to occasional fits of naughtiness, they at last became so bad that they kicked night and day. Every possible means of soothing their ruffled tempers was tried without effect, and then every available precaution was taken to prevent their injuring themselves against the bars

of their boxes, and rugs, mats, and blankets were stuffed in between the animals and the wooden walls that surrounded them, until it seemed impossible that they could injure themselves. Still they kicked on, and the sound all night of the continued dull *thud, thud,* of their heels, became at last so distressing that it disturbed the rest of every one on board who was interested in their fate. The little grey was the first to give in : he lay at last, thoroughly exhausted, against the side of his box, with his body a mass of bruised sores, and every one said he had kicked himself to death. The owner of the black horse took him out of his box one night with the intention of easing him a little, and was very nearly losing him altogether, for the brute got restive and backed towards an open port. However, he was secured again, and before we reached Rangoon, was as passive as the little grey. All the knowing ones in horseflesh on board prophesied that these two horses would never reach their destination, which is a proof that wise men may be sometimes wrong ; as they were not only landed alive, but in the course

of a few weeks had quite recovered their looks. But it was a happy day for all of us—men, women, and horses included—when we found ourselves being slowly towed up the Irrawaddy river.

There is something very charming and exciting in arriving in a totally new country ; in entering upon scenes which you know from hearsay to be different from anything you have ever witnessed before, and amongst a people of whom you have never even seen a specimen. And the approach to Rangoon is very pretty. The broad, glassy river is so calmly quiet ; the banks on either side, although they are flat and muddy on a nearer inspection, seem at a distance fringed with rushes and green trees, from amongst which the gilded pagodas rear their belled heads against the evening sky. I remember a great sense of quiet descending upon me as I stood on the deck of the Agincourt and silently watched the progress we made to our new destination, and felt that on the morrow we should leave the horrors of board ship behind us once more, and set our feet upon dry land.

We anchored about a quarter of a mile from shore, but could not, of course, disembark the troops before morning. As my husband was dressing for that purpose, rather a curious accident happened to him. He occupied a stern cabin, and was sitting upon his mattress on the floor, with a looking-glass in his lap, trying for the first time since he had embarked to make a steady shave, when he heard a tremendous shouting and scuffling of feet on the deck above him.

Now it was here—now it was there—now it seemed everywhere; but still he thought it was no business of his, and went on quietly shaving, taking no notice of the noise overhead, until the voices and the feet in pursuit appeared to approach his cabin. Then indeed he was startled into listening, and wished for a solution of the mysterious tumult. This was soon afforded him, for in another minute his door burst violently open, and before he could raise the slightest objection to the familiarity, a huge black sow, covered with mud and water (I believe she had tumbled into the river and been fished up again), rushed into

his embrace, broke his looking-glass, knocked him head-over-heels, and then, having made the tour of his cabin grunting ferociously, bolted out again into the very arms of her pursuers. It was not a ladylike way of throwing herself upon his protection, but he was obliged to accept the compliment as she chose to give it; yet I think if he had remained on board ship long enough to hear another disturbance on deck, he would have locked his door before he ventured to inquire what was the matter.

As soon as the regiment was landed my husband went on shore also, leaving me on board with several other ladies, until he should have found a house in which to lodge his family. Not long after his departure, we were all standing on deck together, looking with what interest we might upon the place which was to be our home, perhaps, for years. The Agincourt was anchored just opposite the jetty, or landing-wharf, and as I have said before, about a quarter of a mile from shore. Before us lay stretched a long line of buildings, both European and native, which con-

stituted the town and bazaar of Rangoon, and occupied one side of a road which ran along the bank of the river. Here was a large shop or store, built of brick and mortar, and kept by some enterprising Jack-of-all-trades, who sold everything European—from Crosse and Blackwell's pickles to saddles made by Wilkinson and Peat; there, a few native huts with thatched roofs, and sides of plaited bamboo, the owners of which sat cross-legged in front of their goods, stolidly smoking their cigars, and apparently utterly indifferent whether they sold their merchandize or not; whilst their next-door neighbour, a Chinese merchant, who possessed a house built of teak-wood and stocked with articles as valuable and generally much cheaper than those sold by our countrymen, was fussing from his door to his counter and his counter to his door, whilst he divided his efforts between retaining the customers within his shop and attracting more from without.

As we were gazing at them through glasses, a cry was raised on board of “Fire!”

“Where?” “There! don't you see? just

by that large building.” And sure enough there were flames bursting out from behind one of the largest houses, and threatening to spread to the frailer huts beside them. But then there arose a second cry—“There are more flames!—look! several houses off from the first. And there!—and there!—and there!” The excitement became extreme; all the ship’s officers rushed on deck, and the glasses were in great requisition. But soon the conflagration became too general to need any aid to render it visible. Flame after flame burst forth from houses far apart from one another, their fiery tongues rearing themselves towards heaven, and then rushing to meet each other with a low roar, licking the roofs of the intervening buildings as they went.

The excitement on shore was now evidently very great. Natives and Europeans were rushing about in the extremest confusion, trying to save their property or to pull down their houses, but apparently able to do very little to stop the inevitable devastation, which seemed to be general. As far as the eye could

reach, the long line of houses appeared to be one flame, the sullen sound of which, as well as the heat, was to be distinctly heard and felt from the deck of the Agincourt.

The officers of the vessel at first made light of the matter. Fires were of such common occurrence in Rangoon that they thought little of this one. But, as it proceeded, they began to look grave and to talk of placing a wetted awning over the vessel, in case of the sparks (which were flying heavily about us) setting her alight. Soon a graver dread was announced. The fire was approaching the powder-magazine, and my husband's regiment (with the aid of course of all its officers) was working hard in the midst of the flames, trying to pull down the intervening houses, in order to stop the destruction which must ensue if such a calamity could not be prevented.

Then came the most trying time of the whole proceeding. The dreadful fire *would not* stop; it was drawing very near the fatal magazine, and the officers of the Agincourt thought it their duty to place the ladies and children in the cabins on the other side of the

vessel, in anticipation of the shock which she would experience when an explosion took place.

I have experienced several moments in my lifetime which I would rather not pass through again, and been placed in several situations which are unpleasant to look back upon, but I don't think I have ever had a time of greater suspense than the ten minutes which I then passed with my two little babies and my native nurses in the cabin of the Agincourt.

But at the end of that time it was over. The exertions of the regiment had been successful; the native houses had been pulled down in time, and the magazine, as well as those who had worked to save it, was out of danger. After a little time, the rest of the fire had burnt itself out, and what had been a row of flourishing shops in the morning was only a heap of ashes. On that occasion, the whole of the native and European town of Rangoon was burnt to the ground, and our arrival in the place was celebrated by the largest fire that has ever been known to take place there. The original cause was attributed

to the fact of an old woman having upset her cooking-pot of “ghee” into the fire, and thereby setting light to her house; but this story was only trumped up as an excuse. It is a known truth in Burmah, that whenever the coolies, who build the houses, are out of work, they set fire to the town, or cantonment, and thereby make for themselves what fortune has denied them. This trick has now become so common that the native merchants, made wary by experience, have taken to keeping their valuables in boxes on wheels, which, at the first alarm of “fire,” they can trundle out into the street and save. During a residence of eighteen months in Rangoon I was witness to no less than six or seven fires, though none of them equalled in magnitude the one I have attempted to describe; and each house there of any importance, has a ladder resting against the side night and day, in case of alarm, and a row of pots filled with water placed along its parapets, to empty on the thatched roof at a moment’s notice.

The great fire of Rangoon extinguished, my husband, very black and dirty, came on board

to take me on shore ; and I was not sorry to accompany him there, even though I had on landing to pick my steps carefully amid roast cats and dogs (which were, fortunately, with the exception of a couple of natives, the only lives lost in the fire), and they formed anything but a pleasant welcome to my new home.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT the conclusion of my last chapter, I had just stepped from the deck of the Agincourt upon Burmese ground. By the time I did so, my husband had found a house which he thought suitable for us, and only waited for my approval to purchase it.

There is a custom prevalent in Rangoon, with respect to obtaining a roof to shelter you, which is, I fancy, almost peculiar to itself, and consequent upon the continual change of regiments. You cannot hire a house, either by the month or year ; you must buy it outright, or go houseless. The one which had been recommended to us was inhabited, at the time of our landing, by three bachelors, to whom it

had been lent by a friend, as they soon expected to leave Rangoon for Bengal.

It was hard to have to turn them out, like “dissolute orphlings,” upon the world, but still more hard to become so ourselves; so charity commenced at home—and on our deciding to purchase the house from over their heads, the gentlemen had to clear out within half an hour of the fiat. I found upon taking possession, that they must have gone in a terrible hurry, for they had left several of their articles of property behind them, and, amongst other things, a packet of sugar-plums. I sent their valuables after them; but I confiscated the sugar-plums. Meeting one of them quite accidentally, after my return to England, I reminded him of the ungracious manner in which we had turned him out of house and home, and asked him if he had ever missed the confiscated articles.

He remembered them immediately, and maintained that he had mourned their loss at the time bitterly. They were English lollipops, he affirmed; he had paid double their value for them at the “Europe” shop, and

had thought it most treacherous of me to retain them. I offered to make him an ample, though tardy, restitution in the shape of a packet of “bull’s-eyes;” but he declared that all the treasures of Fortnum and Mason’s shop laid at his feet, could not compensate him for what he had felt at the time of his loss.

I represented to him that they were only lemon lozenges after all, and that the effect of the climate had been to render them moist, if not sticky ; but no arguments of mine could persuade him to abandon the notion that he had been cruelly wronged.

“And ‘Europe’ sugar-plums too !” he would say reproachfully ; “how could you have had the heart to do it ?”

I cannot say that the first sight of the house which we had so forcibly entered, struck me as palatial. There are only two sorts of houses built in Rangoon, those of teakwood, and those of bamboo. Ours was a species of hybrid—that is to say, it had been originally all bamboo, but some one had added to it outer walls of wood. The thatched roof was built so sloping to carry off the rain, and

the verandahs which surrounded the house were so wide, that the impression it gave you was, that some one had hit the top of the roof and bonneted the mansion—it looked all thatch. On a closer inspection, however, it proved to be raised on stout piles, some six feet from the ground. It possessed the wide verandah aforesaid, which was reached by a species of ladder; with three large rooms in front, and three small ditto behind. The inner walls were formed of plaited bamboo, covered with a preparation of cow's dung, and then plastered, and there were no ceilings to the rooms, but broad rafters crossed and re-crossed the inside of the barn-like roof, along which rats were playfully coursing after each other, threatening at every moment, in my inexperienced eyes, to fall down upon our devoted heads.

Having landed all our worldly goods and established ourselves in our new quarters, we sat down to such dinner as our servants could, amid so much confusion, provide us. In the middle of it there came a shower of rain, which descending on the thatch soon made an

entrance for itself, and came patterning down upon our heads. We moved the table to another part of the room, but had not been settled there long before the same result was obtained. After another ineffectual effort to keep dry, we hoisted our umbrellas and finished our meal in what comfort we might.

Mentioning the occurrence to some of our newly-made friends afterwards, they smiled at our thinking it singular that the roof should not be waterproof.

“ You forget that this is the *dry* season,” they said; “ when the rains well set in, the leaves of which the thatch is composed will get thoroughly soaked and swell, and then they will be as water-tight as possible.”

The truth of this assertion we afterwards proved for ourselves, but in the meanwhile we wore out our umbrellas.

I never shall forget our first night in the new house. The only thing that day that we had been enabled to do with any comfort was to retire to bed, for we had brought our beds with us. But my baby slept by my side in a large flat basket which had been provided

for her accommodation on board ship, and in the middle of the night I was aroused by her screams. Hastily procuring a light, I found the poor little creature covered with ants which, attracted probably by the remains of some food on her baby-clothes, had swarmed over her and irritated her beyond telling; and although as soon as the baby was undressed the unwelcome intruders were dispersed, they had bitten her so frightfully that there was no more sleep for us or her that night. The first thing we consulted about in the morning was having our sitting-room hung with cloth. We had not been used to see rats “skying” above our heads, and the very idea of their over-reaching themselves made us nervous. So that in a very short time we had some twenty or thirty Burmese coolies busily employed in stretching unbleached linen tightly across the top and sides of the sitting-room, which, when fixed, they covered with a coating of “chunam” (a species of whitewash), and made look really very nice. But we had forgotten, with reference to our friends, the rats, that “out of sight” is not

always “out of mind.” We had fondly thought by shutting them out of view to have secured a remedy for the worst evil connected with them. But the cloth had not been stretched many hours before they lost all the fear with which the proximity of the coolies had transiently inspired them, and descending from their rafters to try its strength, found it such an excellent racecourse, that they were rushing and gambolling up and down it, night and day, squeaking like the sharpest of files, and otherwise rendering themselves very unpleasant. What was to be done? We consulted our head-servant, and he recommended our permitting him to climb up and place saucers of arsenic and rice in the roof, and deep bowls of water in the room below; by this means, he said, the vermin having eaten the rice, would be seized with so unquenchable a thirst that they would smell water any distance off, and descending to drink at that in the ground-floor, must inevitably tumble in, and be drowned. We thought the plan excellent, and gave the man *carte-blanche* to act as he thought fit. But either his zeal was too

great and the arsenic too strong, or the rats were more greedy and less thirsty than was anticipated ; anyhow, although the poison had been carefully conveyed to their haunts between the cloth and the roof, no rats were found in the bowls of water in the sitting-room below. A day or two afterwards, however, the month being March and the weather hot, we perceived a slight smell in the sitting-room of which at first we thought little. A few hours later it was *rather* strong ; by the next morning more than *rather* ; and, to cut a long matter short, it soon became so unbearable that we were compelled to vacate the room altogether, and take our meals in the verandah.

Back came the coolies ; down came all our cherished cloth, and the carcases of seventeen rats, in different stages of decomposition (which had swallowed so much arsenic, that they had had no time to seek the water before they died), left us no room for wonderment as to the cause of our annoyance.

We buried our dead, paid for the re-hanging of our drawing-room paper and

our experience ; and when the children of the defunct rats, even to the third and fourth generation, having forgotten the untimely fate of their progenitors and grown bold from the fact, once more playfully chased each other up and down our cloth ceiling, squeaking as of old, we contented ourselves with an upward glance and a sigh, and a total silence on the subject of their misdeeds. They might do just as they chose ; we never meddled with the rats again, the remedy being so much worse than the disease. Having lined our sitting-room, however, we began next to contemplate its decoration.

We had brought several pictures with us from Madras ; but when we sought to hang them, a difficulty arose from the fact of our walls being manufactured of bamboos, first split, and then interwoven like basket-work, which, although very suitable to maintain a conversation through, were not quite so convenient for driving nails with any hope of their obtaining a purchase. But a happy device struck our minds for overcoming the obstacle ; the picture frames were attached to

coloured cords, and the bamboo walls were very capable of being drilled, so we made little holes in the basket work, thrust the picture cords through, and tied knots in them on the other side.

Our bedroom walls were, consequently, decorated with various knots of red and green worsted ; but, under the circumstances, that was a trifle not worth consideration.

Soon after we had settled in our new house we wished to build in our garden a “go-down,” or detached room, in which to keep stores. For this purpose, our servant procured us a whole gang of native workmen who used to come and work all day.

The Burmese are a jolly, merry set of fellows, and it is quite refreshing to deal with them after having had anything to do with the indolent, inenergetic, and melancholy-looking Hindoos. They are in general broad, thick-set, and muscular-looking men ; but this is, I believe, but an appearance.

Amongst our workmen was a young carpenter who had the most wonderful arms and legs to look at ; but some of the officers of our

regiment having the curiosity to ascertain whether he was as strong as he appeared, his biceps lamentably failed to support the promise of their strength.

But they were such a careless, jovial crew, always grinning from ear to ear, and indulging in hearty laughter, whilst they all joined in the chorus to some rollicking song.

To see them at their work was indeed a wonderful sight. They were agile as monkeys and lithe as snakes : swinging themselves up to the rafters of the room they were erecting by means of bamboo ropes, they would lie along them on their backs whilst they busied themselves with the roof, chattering to each other, or chanting to themselves, whilst their hair, long as a woman's, hung straight down into the centre of the room, giving them a most comical appearance ; or they assembled in a group in front of the house, squatting in a ring on the grass, whilst they plaited the black and white stripes of bamboo into the shape required for the front or sides of the building they were engaged upon.

They are wonderfully clever at this sort of

work. It is quite sufficient to tell them the size you require the house or hut, how many windows and doors they are to make, and where you will have them ; and, sitting down as I have described, they weave the bamboo with the same rapidity that basket-makers handle the osiers, generally in chess-board patterns of black and white, and with the utmost precision. Then they weave leaves and grass together, so as to form as it were vegetable slates wherewith to thatch the houses, to which incident is owing, in a great measure, the rapidity with which fires spread in that country, for the roof of one tenement catching alight, the plaited leaves fly off it in burning flakes, and are readily carried by the breeze from one place to another. Thus, when the fire I have described as taking place the first day we arrived off Rangoon was at its height, parts of the burning thatches were carried all the way from the town to the cantonment—a distance of more than half a mile—to the imminent danger of the gentlemen's houses there.

It is very difficult to get cows' milk in

Burmah, and in consequence, butter ; the reason of which is that the Burmese are forbidden by their religion to take away the life of any animal ; therefore they dare not kill the calves, and the calves drink all the milk. They joyfully seize the carcase, however, of any creature that has died ; and a mortality having occurred amongst our poultry at the time of the erection of the “go-down,” the coolies had a great jubilee, and carried off dead ducks and geese whenever they went home. Hearing this, I asked on what they fed those infants, who should be deprived of their natural food, and the answer was, toad or snake broth, which creatures not being considered sacred are not, I suppose, included in the category of their forbidden dainties. Before we had lived there long we had procured cows, and had our own milk and butter ; but prior to that occurrence we were dependent on the native milkman, and very much astonished I was at seeing him come up the first morning after our arrival. On his head he carried a brass vessel full of what appeared to be eggs, but which proved

to be round balls of a species of butter, manufactured solely from buffaloes' milk (which animals yield that produce much longer than cows), but which was quite uneatable, being white and tasteless, except of rancid grease; and tied under each naked arm, to prevent their slopping, he had the stopperless nozzles of two black bottles of the milk itself, well diluted with water. We had to endure both milk and butter until we procured some of our own—but it was really endurance, and very far from an appreciation of their taste.

The stories which float about Burmah relative to the manner in which the natives manage to increase their store of milk are very dreadful and almost incredible. Sheep's, ponies', and even pigs' milk, is said to have been pressed into the service, without the worst part of the business having been told.

CHAPTER XV.

RANGOON itself always appeared to me to be a very pretty place; but when I have mentioned the fact to people not so prejudiced in its favour as myself, I have met with so much ridicule that I have arrived at the conclusion that it must have been the freshness of its surrounding vegetation which struck me so pleasantly after having lived for nine months amongst the red dusty roads and burnt-up grass of Madras. The native town, which was rebuilt soon after our arrival, ran (as I have said before) along the banks of the river, and was distant about half a mile from the cantonment. This latter consisted of several broad roads, edged with grass, and

laid out in blocks or squares, along which were built the Europeans' houses, each standing in its own “compound,” and generally well shaded with trees; for the settlement being a young one, the ground had not long been reclaimed from the jungle. The teak-wood-built houses were very different in appearance from those made of bamboo, such as I have described, and some of them were not only pretty, but imposing in appearance.

Such as were occupied at the time I speak of, by the general, brigade-major, commissioner, and commissariat officer of Rangoon, might be included in this last category; but then the officers who built these houses, having been present at the taking of the town in the second Burmese war, had had the opportunity of procuring their building materials from the various “poonghy,” or priests' houses around them, and as the Burmese always reserve the very best and thickest of their timber for such sacred purposes, the gentlemen who “looted” them were proportionably lucky in their bungalows.

But later arrivals, who had neither been at

the taking of Rangoon, nor had their pockets filled with rupees, were compelled to be satisfied with bamboo residences like our own, and some with much worse. For whilst we at least enjoyed the privilege of glass windows to shut down in case of rain, and planked floors on which to walk, some of our bachelors were lodged in houses which could only boast of windows (if such they could be called) of basket-work like their walls, and even floorings made of the same material. Our bath-rooms were built after this pattern, and the sensation of walking across plaited reeds is as curious as it feels unsafe. Nor is it calculated at any time to bear a very heavy weight, considering that it is raised some six or eight feet from the ground. Two officers occupying the same house at Thyat-Myo, returned from mess late one night, and on entering their room, heard a strange struggling and growling going on in the verandah which ran round the bungalow, and was composed of this same basket-work. Looking out they perceived a large tiger, which having climbed during their absence into the house, had, on making

an attempt to explore the verandah, been carried by his own weight through the frail flooring, and fairly caught in a trap; being unable to extricate his four legs from the broken bamboos; in which position he was shot. The system of raising the houses on piles from the ground is necessary on account of the great damp of the climate, which would soon rot any wood laid upon it. Even the common huts in the bazaar are built in the same manner, and some are elevated so high that they look more like pigeon-cotes than anything else. We kept a few sheep for our private consumption whilst in Burmah, and we were obliged to have their sleeping-place raised in the same manner, or they soon fell sick and died from the effects of the damp.

We were very interested at first in watching the difference of behaviour between the live stock which we had brought with us from Madras, and that which had been bred and born in Burmah. The former hated the rain, and whenever the showers came on, would make a simultaneous rush for shelter, the fowls, ducks, and geese, creeping under the

house itself, whence we could see them easily through the uncarpeted boards, and the cows, goats, and horses taking up their stand under the verandah, which was more like a stable than anything else.

The Burmese animals, on the contrary, would take that opportunity to leave their resting-places where they had been hiding from the sun, and go out to enjoy the rain, and the wetter they got, the more pleased they were. Of course as soon as the sun shone out again, it was a case of *vice versa*, and so, as we had a plentiful supply of both breeds, they appeared to keep up a constant game of “Puss in the Corner.” After awhile, however, the Madras animals, like ourselves, became acclimatized, and preferred encountering the rain to allowing all the tit-bits to be monopolized by their Burmese acquaintances. The climate of Burmah is certainly one of its drawbacks, although at the same time, it is to its climate that the country owes that fresh verdant appearance which distinguishes it so highly in an English breast, from the parched and arid plains of India.

My first impression of Rangoon was, that it looked like a large bowling-green, and I never dropped that idea. But it certainly is the dampest of all damp places. Nine months in the year the rain descends untiringly upon the earth, until dry roads become running rivers, and much that is valuable is carried away and destroyed. At first we used to put off our rides or drives for the showers, but we soon found that if we followed that plan we should never ride or drive again. So then we did as others did—started gallantly, rain or no rain, until to be wet became our normal condition, and our clothes were so accustomed to it, that they didn't like being dry.

But to attempt to preserve any property in Burmah is folly. The greatest care can do no more than let things spoil as slowly as possible.

I had a valuable guitar on going there, which was locked away in its case for some weeks, on account of having to send for strings to Calcutta. Upon unlocking the case the instrument was found to have collapsed. It was literally lying in so many pieces at the

bottom of the case, every particle of glue having given way under the influence of a few weeks' damp. Books parted from their bindings; picture-frames actually fell from the nail on which they were hung (or rather from the *hole* through which they were hung) in four pieces on the ground, until we learned to nail them together; the clothes, discarded at the commencement of the week, became green with mould before the washing-day came round. At last I was obliged to have some large wicker-work hen-coops made, under which I placed “chatties” (or earthenware pots) of burning charcoal, and hung the dirty clothes over them *daily*, or I should have had all our wardrobes ruined.

My piano, also, a Broadwood, used to become periodically dumb from the swelling of the wood, and refused to speak until it also had been well-aired by chatties of charcoal placed under it; but which severe measures, however necessary, entirely spoilt the instrument in the course of a few months. At last we really used to think that we should be obliged to hang ourselves out to dry every morning

over the back of a chair ; everything we wore and everything we touched smelt and felt so mouldy. We had decidedly become what Mr. Mantalini would have called “ dem'd damp, moist, unpleasant bodies.”

The effect of the climate soon showed itself upon man and beast in the shape of eruptions, which took the character of sore eyes in the former, and of a disease termed “ besottie ” in the horses, which causes them to break out all over their bodies, until they are a mass of disease, and die from poverty of blood. There are several complaints prevalent in Burmah, which appear to be almost peculiar to fresh comers, the most curious of which I have heard called, for lack of a more technical name, “ the Burmese Ennui.” It was more likely to attack women than men (on account, I conclude, of the want of occupation), and took the form of a settled melancholy, due partly to the monotonous temperature, which, if not diverted by change of scene and action, had been known to degenerate almost into a state of idiotcy. A lady was sent to England on this account whilst we were resident in

Rangoon, who had arrived at such a pitch of “ennui” that she would neither eat nor drink, but sat all day doing nothing, with the tears rolling almost insensibly down her cheeks. The dread of this mental disease fastening upon my own nervous temperament, which was always of rather a changeable character, made me more active whilst in Rangoon than during any other term of my exile, to which circumstance I attribute the reason that the time I passed there was more enjoyable to me than any other spent in the East.

The first thing every morning, wet or dry, I was in the saddle.

I used occasionally to ride a horse whilst in Rangoon; but for explorations in the surrounding jungle, nothing was so sure-footed or convenient as a native pony. The one I kept for my particular use was acknowledged to be a great beauty, being thirteen hands, which is an unusual height for a Pegu pony, and rendered him valuable in proportion. “Ajax” was black, built like a little dray-horse for strength, and very clever at jumping. We had another, a grey, called “Saxon,”

which was a prettier pony than “Ajax,” though not so large, but he had a hard mouth, which is one of the peculiar faults of that breed.

“Ajax” cost twenty-five, and “Saxon” twenty pounds; both very high prices for Pegu ponies, for ten pounds is considered a very fair sum to give for one, and the little mares that are too small for breeding (some of them not being much larger than Newfoundland dogs) can be had for very small prices, varying from one pound to three. The Pegu ponies are very strong, and generally very obstinate; they are difficult to sit for any one who has been accustomed to ride a horse, on account of their ambling paces, by which they almost “wriggle” their riders off, and their disposition for “shying” which is very great. They are the only creatures, however, fitted to ride through a country which is more than half jungle, and which possesses no roads to speak of.

My horse was continually falling with me, through awkwardness in attempting to climb over slippery banks, or jump over roots in the

jungle, whilst I never met with an accident on a Pegu pony but once. I was accompanying my husband and a friend in an expedition through the jungle, the gentlemen walking, whilst I rode a pony called “Sandy;” at one part of the way, we came upon the dry bed of a watercourse, which was some six feet deep, and across which a rough, narrow bridge of planks had been thrown. I had no fear about crossing it, particularly as my friend had his hand on my bridle-rein, but as “Sandy” reached the middle he halted, and planting his fore-feet firmly upon the bridge, refused, donkey-wise, to stir either backward or forward. The gentleman who led him gave him a cut with his stick, when the brute instantly commenced to back towards the edge of the planks, and, getting his hind feet over, threw me off in his struggle into the bed of the watercourse.

My friend fought with the pony for a minute, and then, by sheer strength and the use of the reins, hauled him on to the planks again, and forced him over to the other side. In the meanwhile I was lying on my back in

the “nullah.” It was not a comfortable situation, nor a bed one would care to go to sleep in, for the water had made deep ruts in it, which the sun had baked as hard as wood, and having alighted with my backbone right upon one, I had a lump as large as an egg on it twelve hours afterwards. However, my husband came to my assistance, and I was able to ride home again, and to be thankful that “Sandy” had not alighted on the top of me, when I might have been killed, instead of only bruised.

But in general the little Pegu ponies refuse nothing, and will creep, like the “shelties” of Scotland, over places where two feet can hardly go.

There was a lovely little lane close to the cantonment, called “Tiger Alley.” It had been at one time part of a road through the jungle, and was paved with bricks; for the Burmese jungles mostly possess these paved paths laid down for the use of travellers some hundreds of years ago. “Tiger Alley” was a famous place for tigers, in the days, I suppose, when the bricks were not there; but

at present it is nothing but a flowering by-path. The bushes and trees which line it meet overhead, whilst it is so narrow that two horses can barely walk abreast; and its banks are a mass of Burmese wild flowers, the names of which I wish I could remember, and amongst the roots of which peep out fungi of the most outlandish character. One I recall as being almost peculiar to “Tiger Alley;” it was perfectly white, perforated like the finest lace, and grew on a delicate stem in the exact shape of a parasol. It was so graceful and so pretty I never could resist picking it, and taking it home with me. But as it invariably shrivelled, turned brown, and smelt most ferociously before I had accomplished my object, it was hardly worth the trouble that experience would not teach me *not* to take for it. There is something very treacherous in the soil of Rangoon; it abounds with holes, and is generally supposed to contain quicksands. Soon after our arrival the black Cape horse, which kicked so much on the voyage over, suddenly, whilst being ridden, fell up to its knees in a hole, and had its fetlocks so injured,

from forcible extrication, that they were never quite free from puffiness afterwards; and at another time my own horse stumbled in like manner with me whilst quietly walking along an apparently safe road, and sunk so rapidly in the soil, that the gentleman who accompanied me bade me throw myself off into the mud, before he could assist the animal out, and told me afterwards that I was lucky to have escaped with a dirty riding-habit. My horse on that occasion was so frightened at the accident that he refused to stir, even when he could; and tales were told us by which it was affirmed that animals had been literally lost by such means, and if not swallowed up, drowned or suffocated in the mire, from which, paralyzed by fear, they were unable to extricate themselves.

CHAPTER XVI.

RATHER a laughable incident occurred shortly after our settling in Rangoon, and before we were entitled to lose the name of “griffins” in Burmah. One of the most remarkable animal productions peculiar to the country is a large species of lizard, called by the natives a “tuc-too.” I was never fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to meet one of these wonderful creatures, but they were described to me as a kind of cross between a small crocodile and an imp of Satan; and I had been warned not to be alarmed if ever I woke in the night and perceived something like a little black devil clinging to the muslin curtains of my bed, and heard it give vent to

a very peculiar cry, which, commencing with a note resembling its name of “tuc-too,” repeated several times, ends in a deep groan, said to be like nothing earthly. As I said before, I was never subjected to the test of encountering one of them, and rather rejoiced at the circumstance, as from the lively descriptions of my friends, notwithstanding their warning, no doubt my hair would have turned grey with fright if I had.

Some of our party, however, were neither lucky enough to be warned or to escape a visit from the “tuc-too.”

Two of the officers of our regiment, who occupied the same house, returning one evening late from mess, retired to their respective rooms, which happened to be next one another ; and as both their beds were placed against the inner wall, a bamboo partition was all that separated them. One of them was officer of the day, and throwing his sword down by his bedside as he turned in, he was soon, in conjunction with his brother officer, fast asleep.

How long the brother officer slumbered the

cherub who kept watch over him best knows, but he was awakened by a sound greatly resembling a human voice, which uttered “tuc-too, tuc-too” close to his ear, and finished up by a deep groan. He had never been told that he might expect in Rangoon to receive such a nocturnal visitor; he had no knowledge of the Burmese language; and anything unpleasant, either in sight or sound, he had been accustomed to associate with a native. Once convinced that the noise he heard was not part of his dreams, the officer roused himself to listen. No! it was not a mistake; in another minute the voice again repeated “tuc-too, tuc-too,” slowly, but distinctly, some seven or eight times, and then groaned as before. This was unbearable. The room was quite dark, and objects undistinguishable; but he had not the least doubt in his own mind that a Burmese native had by some means gained access to the sanctuary of his sleeping apartment, and was standing by his bedside muttering gibberish at him.

“Who’s there?” he asked authoritatively.

“Tuc—too,” was the answer.

“ You brute !” exclaimed the officer, preparing for action. “ I’ll break your head if you don’t stop that row.”

But the “brute” did not stop, or make a feint of having understood the gentleman’s threat, but kept on repeating “tuc-too” with a deliberation which must have been very aggravating to a man who had served her Majesty for ten or twelve years with the thermometer at one hundred and eight degrees in the shade, and was still a subaltern. A stick lay close to the officer’s hand; very few Europeans go to bed in India without a weapon of defence ready in case of emergency; and seizing it quickly, he dealt a smart blow in the supposed direction of the obdurate stranger. But sleep and indignation combined had confused his faculties, and instead of aiming at the mosquito-curtains, which hung towards the centre of the room, he levelled his fury on the other side, and the stick alighted with becoming force upon the slight bamboo wall which divided his bed from that of the officer of the day, who was reposing his head in such a position that the

fact struck him in anything but a pleasant light, and woke him with a sudden start.

There had been talk at the mess that night and in the cantonment for some days previously, of the prospect of an expected rising amongst the Burmese prisoners, who, when they become too many for their gaolers, are given playfully to stick them in the stomach, and then run riot about the town, setting a-light to the houses, and amusing themselves in various light-hearted and innocent ways.

Waked by so unexpected a shock, from dreams which had, perhaps, partaken of the nature of such discussions, the first idea which struck the mind of the officer of the day was, that the insurrection had commenced, the gaol was broken open, and the prisoners loose upon the cantonment. Jumping out of bed with a shout, he seized his sword, and drawing it, rushed out of his room, when he ran against his brother officer, who had, on the sound of his voice of alarm, also vacated his sleeping apartment, and was as eager as himself to learn what was the reason of the disturbance; whilst the poor “tuc-too,” terrified

beyond measure by the sudden noise, had crept away, probably to the very top of the mosquito-curtain, and was clinging there with his toad-like head and throat widely inflated with fear.

The rencontre of course led to an explanation ; the native servants were summoned, who pointed out the trembling cause of so much excitement, and the officers went to bed again, rather staggered at having made so much noise about a “tuc-too.”

But the story gained wind (as every story does in that part of the world) amongst their countrymen, and it was a long time before they ceased to be joked about the mutiny of the Burmese prisoners.

More than a year afterwards this circumstance was recalled to my mind by another, scarcely less ludicrous. One of the regiments then stationed in Rangoon had started a tiny weekly newspaper, which they printed themselves, and called *The Little Rangoon Herald*, and which was devoted to a great deal of harmless fun. In an evil moment, however, I thought of becoming one of their contribu-

tors, and having hastily penned a few doggrel verses on the circumstance related above, I added to them a short advertisement, which ran thus :

“Lost, on Sunday evening last, at the Cantonment Church, Rangoon, the key-note of the ‘Magnificat,’ as well as time, tune, and a variety of trifling articles belonging to the same composition. Whoever will restore the same to the drummer who played the seraphine on that occasion, will not only greatly oblige the whole congregation, but be entitled to a special vote of thanks from that portion of it which has the slightest ear for music.”

The joke (if any) of this advertisement lay in the fact that at that time we had only a black drummer to play the seraphine for us in church, who knew so little of the instrument, that instead of leading our hymns of praise, he was wont to send us all into the most indecorous of laughter, and on the Sunday alluded to, it had been something so dreadful that we had all agreed that it was becoming too bad to be endured, and that such a farce should not be permitted in a place of worship.

In penning the advertisement, however, I had had no idea but that of creating a laugh amongst ourselves, and little thought that its insertion would be fraught with the death of *The Little Rangoon Herald*. However, so it was: my verses and advertisement were sent anonymously, and inserted openly. The copy of the paper was seen; some one magnanimously took up the cause of the black drummer, and tried by a series of letters addressed to the writer of the advertisement, and published in the regular cantonment newspaper, to convince me that I knew nothing of music, and that the drummer was (to use his advocate's own expression) a “second Mozart;” which letter, attracting the notice of the General, caused the origin of the quarrel to be inquired into, and ended, I regret to say, in an order for the cessation of the publication of the nicest little paper that was ever got up by a set of witty and good-natured young men, anxious to promote, as far as in them lay, the amusement of their fellow-exiles. The authorship of the unlucky advertisement never transpired, and I kept my secret until some

years afterwards, when I met again one of the “staff” of *The Little Rangoon Herald*, and, talking over old times, the subject of the paper’s death and the contribution which caused it, came again on the tapis. I asked him if they had ever found out who sent them the advertisement?

“Oh yes!” he replied, “at least, it was never downright confessed, you know, because of the row with the General; but we all knew the man; it was ——, of the ——.”

“Indeed!” I remarked.

“Yes,” he went on confidently to say, “he sent us those verses about the ‘tuc-too’ at the same time; when we suspected it was he, we accused him of it.”

“Did he say he wrote them?” I asked.

“Not exactly, but he didn’t deny it; it was easy enough to see by his face that he *had* written them; but it was a great pity they smashed up our paper.”

And I perfectly agreed with him, and thought it would be much better if, next time ——, of the ——, wrote such funny verses and advertisements, he kept them to himself.

This is a terrible talk about nothing, but it proves what little things make up the sum of life in a place where idleness is the general occupation.

As I have had occasion to mention the church at Rangoon, I may as well attempt to describe it in this place as in any other.

It was just like an old barn ; a great deal worse built and worse fitted up than any of the private houses ; and I often wondered what the Burmans, who are so particular about the ornamentation of their own places of worship, could think of the religion which permitted Christians to keep the House of God in a worse state of repair than their own. The outer walls were certainly built of teak-wood, but rafters and rats formed the ceiling, and the altar within the rails was a mass of hanging shreds of torn and dirtied red cloth of the commonest native manufacture ; whilst the seats for the accommodation of officers and their families were simply wooden benches.

Sparring between the ecclesiastical and the military forces was the order of the day whilst

our regiment was in Rangoon, and very pretty play it was to watch too, at times.

With the exception of the drummer, who commenced the “Magnificat” in A sharp, and concluded it triumphantly in B flat, we had no reason to complain of carelessness in the manner our church-services were conducted ; on the contrary, we were blessed with a pastor who seemed so literally to consider us in the light of a flock, and himself, I suppose, as the bell-wether, that he used to take a bell into the pulpit with him, and ring it every time the congregation was expected to rise. Having been used, however, to English churches, and rational clergymen, the members of the congregation “didn’t seem to see it,” and the first Sunday that the bell tinkled, they obstinately kept their seats. Further explanations were afforded them, and the bell again went “tinkle, tinkle ;” still “Britons would not be slaves,” and rise in a body when the bell-wether chose, and the end of it was that the bell was discarded, and the worshippers used their eyes, and rose from their seats as the prayer-book directed them.

The same clergyman (not being a father himself) presently announced his determination of dipping our babies at their baptism according to the letter of the Rubric ; that is, however, not at all “discreetly,” but heads, christening caps and all, into the font. But at this the British mothers rose up in a body, and if they could not prevent, at all events out-generalled him. I have seen a lady in Rangoon take off her baby’s wetted cap in the middle of the service, and dry its head before all the congregation. So that if our clergyman thought we were better employed doing that than following him in the baptismal prayers, his object was doubtless effected. His motives were perhaps straightforward, but the day arrived when he went too far and considerably damaged his prospects, for he preached a sermon from the pulpit which was not fit for a mixed assemblage to listen to. It was addressed to the young men of the cantonment, and was, doubtless, very appropriate to the circumstances, and well deserved by their behaviour ; but it was a discourse to which men and women could not listen to-

gether with comfort. Husbands and fathers returned home enraged, declaring unanimously that their wives and daughters should never attend church again whilst the same clergyman remained amongst them; and so high did the vox populi ascend, that the very next day a meeting was held on the subject, and the commanding officers of the various regiments were each requested to write his opinion of the sermon, to be forwarded to the Bishop of Calcutta. I remember the remark of one of them, signed with his name, ran thus: “Only fit to be preached before the inmates of a Magdalen Hospital;” and the remainder were not much more flattering. The consequence was, that shortly afterwards, our too zealous clergyman was removed from Rangoon.

Why, because the East is separated from us by a few bucketsfull of salt water, we should become *outré* in our fashions, in our discourses, and our behaviour, as soon as we touch its shores, is a dubious question, but it certainly is the case that one does hear and see strange things there occasionally. Here is an extract

from a sermon delivered from the pulpit in Secunderabad :

“ My brethren,” said the witty preacher, “ I dare say that you imagine the devil is a hideous creature with horns, hoofs, and a tail, and think that you would be certain to know him if you saw him ; but, I can assure you, that you are greatly mistaken. He is nothing of the sort. He is a very good-looking fellow, and wears *uncommonly tippy boots.*”

A striking method perhaps, but decidedly a novel one, for conveying the notion that sin comes oftener to us in a pleasant than unpleasant form ! But before I dismiss the subject of our banished clergyman and the Rangoon church, I may as well relate a most disgraceful scene which took place there, in consequence of another specimen of his mistaken zeal, which used on occasions to assume very much the appearance of temper. The doors of the barn-like building being always left open during divine service, on account of the heat, various dogs belonging to the soldiers used to creep in after their masters, and lie down under their feet.

I do not mean to say that, as a rule, dogs are admissible to places of public worship, but as there were no means here of keeping them out, and the animals always lay very quiet during service (except for an occasional snore, or thump of a wagging tail), it would have been as well perhaps to pass over the irregularity of the proceeding. At all events, the sequel seems to prove it. One Sunday morning, after prayers, as our High Church pastor mounted the pulpit, he perceived a large rough head peeping out from between the feet of a soldier, and calling to the half-caste, who was supposed to perform the duties of clerk, he ordered him to turn the animal out before he commenced his sermon. But the dog had teeth, and showed them; and so the clerk left the church to procure a long pole, wherewith to eject the intruder. The first thrust was answered by an angry snarl, but all warnings on the part of the dog's master were frustrated by the clergyman, who, getting visibly angry, kept on directing the half-frightened clerk to continue thrusting the pole under the benches at the dog, who became more enraged with

each fresh assault, and backed away from between his master's feet, every hair on his body erect, and growling as he went. Presently, his backing carried him under the petticoats of some gaily-dressed, half-caste women, who immediately gave loud screams and leaped upon the benches, standing where they had been sitting, and holding up their dresses unnecessarily high. Still the clergyman urged on the efforts of the clerk, and the women shrieked till the owner of the dog, tired of the commotion he was exciting, rose from his seat, and giving the poor animal one tremendous kick, sent him flying out at the open door of the church.

Now the Burmese are terribly afraid of dogs ; they never keep them as pets themselves, and it is difficult to get them to approach one. The various palanquin-coaches which had brought the ladies to church were tied up in the shade, whilst the half-naked native grooms (who run by the side of the little ponies) were sleeping about on the steps of the church-door. The dog, in passing so summarily through the air at the instigation

of a British foot, happened to alight with a howl right upon the outstretched carcass of a slumbering Burman, who, waking with a still louder howl, set off running towards the cantonment as if the old gentleman himself had been after him. The scene in the church had been very difficult to contemplate with suitable decorum, but the subsequent contre-temps was too ludicrous to be within the power of any present to view calmly.

The men were all looking very hard at nothing at all, the women giggling without any discretion, and, during the sermon which followed, a sudden thought of the snarling dog under the half-castes' petticoats, or the frantic fright of the rudely-awakened Burman, would set some one off again, until every breast was possessed with one wild wish that the sermon would finish, and set us free to laugh as much as we thought fit.

This disreputable church has at last been discarded, and an iron one erected for the use of the cantonment, but I have heard from friends that the metal is so ill-calculated to keep off the heat of the sun, that it renders

the building almost useless except for evening services, and that, notwithstanding the dogs, the rats, and the tatters, they often wish they were as cool in their new church as they used to be in the old leaky barn in which we have so often worshipped together.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOLLOWING close on the heels of a description of the Rangoon church, it does not seem unreasonable that there should come a description of the Rangoon cemetery, although it was such a dreary-looking place that the remembrance almost baffles one's powers of sketching. It was situated at a short distance from the cantonment, and on so steep a decline that the bearers of the coffins had the greatest difficulty in keeping their equilibrium as they jolted with them to their graves, which were generally half full of water. The grass of the cemetery was thick and rank, and always soaked with wet, and the uneven narrow paths a mass of soft yielding clay, into

which the feet of the mourners sunk ankle-deep. The fact of its extreme damp could, of course, make no real difference either to the living or the dead, but it was an uncomfortable idea ; and if we must go under the ground, it is just as well to lie *dry* as not.

The Rangoon funerals, also, were not always conducted so decorously as they might have been. An officer who joined his regiment there from England, although totally unfit in health to do so, died shortly after his arrival, and before he had had time to make many friends. The disease which killed him being on the brain, he had been left more to the care of his servants and doctor than is usual in such cases in India, for the kindness of officers to one another on their sick and dying beds is proverbial. This poor fellow, however, not being sensible, died in the night, whilst under the charge of his servant; and in the morning, hearing the news, one of his brother officers went over to his house to make arrangements for the funeral. When he arrived the corpse was already laid out, and what was his horror on finding that the

native had carefully arrayed it in a tight-fitting suit of regimentals even down to the boots and straps, in which costume, although it looked most ghastly (having undergone, like all corpses of Europeans dying in India, a post-mortem examination), it was obliged to be buried, as it was not in a fit condition to be pulled about! But the difficulty was to procure it a coffin. There was not such a thing to be got ready-made in Rangoon, and not a soul could be found to make one. The funeral was to take place in the afternoon, and meanwhile the officer was running all over the town, trying to get somebody to knock up a shell to receive the corpse. At the eleventh hour he obtained the assistance of two soldiers in an European corps, who went to work and made a species of rough coffin, into which the body was placed on a layer of straw, and hastily fastened down with a few nails. When it was brought to the grave, however, and lowered, it was found that it could only descend about half way, where it stuck, the aperture not having been dug wide enough. One of the men of the carrying-party was

therefore ordered to go down into the grave and set it right, when the clumsy fellow, mis-understanding his directions, leapt heavily on the top of the frail coffin and crushed in the lid; after which there remained nothing to be done but to fill in the grave as quickly as possible, and shut it out of sight. I was present at the funeral, and when I heard the crash, I felt glad that none of his relations were there to have their feelings outraged by the accident.

But why does not Government keep proper coffins in store for the use of the military forces? Rangoon is not the only place where great difficulty is experienced in case of a death; there is just the same trouble to be taken, and with little better results, in many parts of India. The deaths which take place in the East, in the service of her Majesty, are, I suppose, ten per cent. more numerous than in England. Of an English regiment which landed in China, one thousand strong, there was left, after seven years spent in Hong Kong, but four men of those who had originally gone there; and the deaths

of children in India, as compared to those of children in England, was reckoned but the other day, to be five to one. The least thing, under the circumstances, that Government could do, would be to bury them decently. Over the gate of the English burying-ground in Hong Kong it has caused this truth to be engraved, “My turn to-day; your s to-morrow;” after which, it is strange that it should not have thought of the necessity of providing coffins for such a constant demand.

To turn from the contemplation of the European places of worship and sepulture in Burmah, to those of the natives of the country, entails a comparison which will not reflect greatly to the credit of the former; for the pagodas in Rangoon are lovely, and nothing that the Burmese can do to enhance their attractions or increase their value has been omitted. Although Rangoon (and the surrounding country) abounds with pagodas of all sizes, they are but offshoots of the principal one, the great Da-gon Pagoda, which is also erected in that place, and can be seen for miles around: “chapels of ease,”

indeed, where, if the worshipper be disabled by illness or distance from gaining the great pagoda, his prayers may be offered up and accepted. The Da-gon Pagoda is built upon the top of a high hill, and is approached by four flights of steps from the north, east, west, and south; each consisting of, I believe, upwards of three hundred stairs. These flights are covered in, and on feast-days, when all the Burmese, rich and poor, assemble to make their offerings, and pray at the various shrines which surround the pagoda, bringing their wives, covered with gold and jewels, with them, the steps are lined with the most picturesque of figures; women and children sitting with baskets before them filled, some with coloured flags and packets of gold-leaf; others with tapers and bunches of ribbons, and others again with plantains, rice, and sweetmeats,—all offerings to the idols which the worshippers buy as they pass. With the flags and ribbons they decorate the sacred trees; the tapers they burn before their gods, and the rice and plantains they leave upon their shrines,

where, if the priests do not need it, the crows soon gobble it all up. The packets of gold-leaf they stick upon the great pagoda itself, for it is gilt from summit to base, and it is a rule that every devotee who goes to worship there shall contribute his share towards keeping it so; which duty is so thoroughly performed that the huge erection appears at a distance to be made of burnished gold, and, seen beneath the rays of the sun, is perfectly dazzling.

The last of the tedious flights of steps gained (we used to ride our ponies up them sometimes), a large platform presents itself, where, encircling the Da-gon Pagoda, are not only the smaller temples alluded to (each of which contains its one or more hideous idols), but a guard-room, erected for ourselves, at which a guard is stationed every day; and in a secluded corner, the graves of those Englishmen who fell at the taking of the Pagoda in the first Burmese war. There are not above six or eight mounds, I think, including men and officers, but they seem so lonely lying there, a little Christian cluster

in the midst of so much heathenism, that I often found myself falling into reveries over the spot, and wondering if they were still remembered by the friends who shall never stand there themselves. The form of most of the pagodas is the same, but the smaller ones are far more elegant than the larger. They usually stand on three or four plinths from which the erection tapers upward, in the character of the column in the Place Vendôme, till it terminates in a gilt spire, on which is placed downwards a gold fret-work in the shape of a goblet, from the edge of which depend gold bells, which, being loose, shake with every breeze, and tinkle most musically in the evening air. The ornaments on these pagodas are really *gold*; and, at the time of the war, guards were placed night and day at the foot of the columns to prevent the sacrilegious soldiers carrying off the metal.

A temple built on the outskirts of Rangoon at a village called Kemmendine, was to me most attractive, because of its fantastic character, and I used to visit it every time I passed that way. It had been erected by

some rich old Burman as a thank-offering on the occasion of his son having passed the highest examination for the priesthood, and become a “poonghy” of the first water. It was built in the shape of a cross, and consisted of four porches, each as large as the shrine to which they led, and which contained a brass idol the size of life, said to be of great value.

Each porch was supported on pillars, made apparently of red sealing-wax, so vivid was their colouring; and had a ceiling which at first sight looked like an incrustation of jewellery, so closely set (in the shape of large birds, supposed to be hovering in mid-air) were the pieces of glass of which it was composed. As I examined this wonderful specimen of Burmese decoration, I was struck with the regular form of the inlaid glass; row after row of amber, ruby, emerald, and sapphire, was set upon the breasts, heads, and wings of the marvellous natural productions which occupied the ceiling of the porch, as round as sixpences, and many of them encircled by metal rims. I thought

that it must have taken the executors, at that rate, years to manufacture the materials alone, for everything made there is of course done by hand. However, on examining it closer, I discovered, to my infinite amusement, that the Burmese were a little sharper than I gave them credit for, and that, whoever had done the work, Birmingham had supplied the materials. My inlaid circular pieces of glass, which must have occupied so much time and patience in the completion, proved to be nothing but dozens upon dozens of common glass buttons of every hue, which were so arranged as to have an admirable effect. The “poonghies,” or priests of Burmah, have to pass very difficult examinations before they become such, and the different grades they have attained are marked by the shade of the yellow garments which they wear.

Yellow is the ecclesiastical colour in Burmah, and the deeper the hue of the priest’s robe, the higher are his attainments and his rank. They take a vow of celibacy during the term of their priesthood, but if, after a while, they should desire to marry or to

return to the wives they may have left; they are at liberty to do so, dropping their profession. Whilst the vow is in force, however, it is very stringent, as they may not speak to a woman, nor if possible look at one. My great amusement in encountering one of these priests whilst riding with gentlemen, was to get my companions to stop and enter into conversation with him, and, after awhile, to ask him for some water to drink. All the Burmese are very friendly and good-natured, and the priest would fetch the water directly in his own cup. When it arrived, my cavaliers would desire him to offer it to me first, as in England women are always served before men. His confusion at being asked, and reluctance to comply with the request—his averted eyes and silence when I addressed him—used to amuse me beyond measure. Once I did a horrible thing. A friend of mine asked a priest to let him see the beads he wore round his neck, and then maliciously handed them to me for inspection; and I, out-heroding Herod, put them round my own throat, and asked him how

they looked. I never shall forget the man's glance of horror as he saw them defiled; at first he refused to receive them back again, but after awhile, was persuaded into doing so, and slunk home with them. I dare say he never told his superior anything about it, or he would have had penance to do for a month.

These priests live by the people. Every morning and evening they go round the villages with a flat basket slung in front of them, ringing a bell, at the sound of which the women came running out of their houses—some with rice, some with a few plantains, or a fowl, and place it in the basket, when the priest solemnly inclines his head and goes on, without looking at his benefactors. When a “poonghy” of the highest class dies they make a great fuss about it. He is first embalmed in honey for a year, after which the corpse is taken out and burnt; and the European residents fight very shy of any honey offered for sale at the door for some time afterwards. A “poonghy” was burnt whilst we were in Rangoon, and the funeral

car, built to receive the corpse, was really most tastefully designed, although the gorgeous erection was nothing but a mass of tinsel, glass, and gold-leaf. It was very high, so much so that the corpse of the poor little “poonghy,” which had doubtless shrivelled in the honey, looked like that of a child of tender years, placed at the top of it. The body was covered with gold-leaf, which took away all appearance of death. The car was dragged through the cantonment all day, accompanied by various other cars, and a good deal of shouting, singing, and playing upon musical glasses, at the end of which a curious ceremony took place. The funeral car, with ropes attached to both ends, was placed upon a chalked line, and a certain number of women and men in possession of either side. At a given signal they commenced to pull, and whichever sex got the car over the chalked line had the honour, I think, of setting light to the funereal pyre, and of being considered “the better horse” until another “poonghy” was ready to be raffled for. On the occasion I speak of the

women gained the day, at which I was not surprised, for the Burmese female is a wide-chested, strapping creature, and looks quite as strong as the male. However, as the laws of the land are all in favour of the nobler sex, I am not aware what particular advantage they derived from having been sufficiently muscular to pull the old priest's car out of the hands of their lords and masters.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RIDING one day through the Rangoon jungle with a friend from whom I have been now for some years parted, we suddenly came upon a little patch of cultivated ground. We had often passed that way before, but, strange to say, we had never noticed its existence, owing perhaps to the fact that the palings which surrounded it were close and jealously high. On this occasion, however, the gate had been left open, and peeping in, a charming sight met our view. Arches of trellis-work crossed the paths in various directions, from which hung thick clusters of the westeria, with its pale blue blossoms; of the gorgeous orange trumpet-flower, and of other creepers, both

white and red. Bordering the beds were rows of gaily-coloured balsams, whilst bushes of pink roses (a rarity in Burmah) and other flowers filled up the interstices, and turned this spot of pristine jungle into a blooming oasis. Leaving our ponies at the gate we ventured into the enchanted ground, which so palpably reminded us of the garden immortalized in the old fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast; almost expecting at every turn to see some hideous figure rise up from behind the bushes and punish us for our temerity. However, we encountered nothing worse than an old Burmese gardener, who, instead of turning us out, seemed very pleased to see us, and displayed his flowers with great pride, picking us some roses into the bargain. Of course we asked him who was the owner of this little sequestered paradise, and his answer was, “The sea-captain.” This was straightforward, but scarcely conclusive, as sea-captains at times abound in Rangoon. But to all further inquiries as to the name, place of residence, or ship owned by the owner of the garden, the little Burman would give no satis-

factory replies. All he appeared to know was the calling of his employer. We returned home full of the mysterious garden and mysterious captain ; and a few days afterwards, in evidence of the truth of our story, set out for the same spot accompanied by several friends. But we were never again fated to enter the “sea-captain’s” garden.

As we essayed to do so, we were met at the gate by the gardener, who talked very fast and very obsequiously, but held his city meanwhile with unyielding firmness, and would permit of no intrusion. The “sea-captain” had been there, it appeared, since ourselves, and discovered that the privacy of his territory had been invaded, and his orders for the future had been so stringent that the Burman dared not infringe them. So we were turned back from the very doors, and the outside of the palisades was all that we ever after saw of the “sea-captain’s” garden ; though a withered rose, somewhere amongst my treasures, still serves to remind me of the day on which I viewed it. Just as this little patch of flowers appeared rising from the midst of the un-

cultivated jungle which surrounded it, do my memories of the eighteen months spent in Rangoon loom brightly from amongst the dull years by which they were preceded.

The life we lived there was not a gayer one than such as India can afford, but it was a fresher, happier life ; it was living less in oneself and the petty occurrences of a cramped society ; and more in the pleasures which are to be derived from a first acquaintance with a novel and interesting country. The jungle on the outskirts of Rangoon is still utterly wild and unreclaimed, and beautiful in consequence. In some parts the ground is a mass of pine-apple plants, which, when the fruit is in season, it is impossible to traverse without crushing it and the brightly variegated leaves beneath your horse's feet. In most, the densely thick foliage is hung with regal parasites, whilst delicate air-plants are seen between the fork of every cleft bough. The butterflies are splendid, sometimes measuring as much as eleven inches from wing to wing ; whilst their colours are so brilliant that, as they flutter over the hedgerows, they

look as if clothed in orange, black, or tawny plush ; with eyes upon their wings like those upon the feathers of the peacock. There are not many flowers in Rangoon, not at least in the cantonment, but the trees which line the roads mostly blossom, which gives them a very gay appearance. There were two kinds of trees sheltering our regimental lines, which bore large flowers of yellow and purple, and I believe were tulip trees, but I am not sure. The graceful feathery bamboo grows everywhere, and there was a large clump of them in our “compound,” in which the natives said a devil had taken up his residence, but if so, he led a very domestic life whilst we were there, and never showed his face abroad. One of the cantonment roads was shaded by mangoe-trees, the foliage of which is very dark and glossy ; and when the paddy-birds (which are a species of small crane, white and puffy) tucked up their long legs, put their heads under their wings, and went to sleep by hundreds on their branches, the trees had the appearance of being laden with snowy blossoms. It is fatal to a tree, however, when paddy-

birds commence to build and roost in it ; as its leaves soon drop off and leave nothing but bare branches behind ; so poisonous to vegetable life are the excretions of this bird.

The jungle towards Kemmendine was for some time the harbour of a “rogue” elephant, which caused much uneasiness in the cantonments, as it used to roam about at night and do a great deal of mischief. The brute was supposed to have followed some female elephants which were brought into Rangoon for sale from up-country, and was soon after reported to be wandering about the adjacent jungle. It would sally forth as soon as it was dark, and tear the roofs off the native huts, in some cases trampling the inmates under foot. It had killed several cows and other stock ; and every night its shrill trumpeting might be heard about the cantonment, sometimes close to the houses, which, considering the frailty with which they were built, was more startling than pleasant. An officer who had been present at the inquest held upon a native in his regiment who had been killed by this elephant, told me that the corpse was not

recognisable as that of a man : it was simply a mass of quivering flesh, without any shape in it. This was in consequence of the elephant's method of manslaughter being to seize the victim in his trunk by the legs, and swing him against a tree until there was not a whole bone left in his body, and, as may be concluded, little life.

At last, so many lives had been lost and so much damage done, that a paternal government thought it time to interfere, and the handsome reward of fifty rupees (five pounds) was offered for the tail of the playful quadruped. Accordingly, shooting parties of natives and Europeans were organized daily, and every man in the cantonment thirsted to become the avenger of blood. The curious part of it was, that every one saw him, and every one hit him, and yet nobody brought him home. The number of men who informed me that they had *heard* their bullet hit the elephant's carcass was legion ; and all I can say is that, if none of them were mistaken, the brute must have been a perfect bag of bullets before he gave up the ghost. A little while before that

event, however, a great success occurred. A party of officers, having been sufficiently unfortunate (notwithstanding their true aim) as to hit the elephant in every place but the right one, during the daytime, resolved to watch for him at night, and divided themselves accordingly, hiding in various places along the road by which he entered the town. The hero of the story had waited, I know not how long, in his concealment, when the approach of a heavy tread warned him of the vicinity of the savage animal. He peeped out: he was not mistaken: the elephant was taking his way from the jungle slowly but surely. The gentleman cocked his gun; his companion, stationed behind the opposite hedge, did nothing of the kind: he had evidently not been on the alert: the glory and honour would be all his own: his breast glowed with his coming triumph. Raising his arm to fire, however, as the elephant came full in view, he saw the head of his friend suddenly pop up in the moonlight whilst his voice exclaimed:

“Hold hard there, B——! What are you

doing, man? Why that's one of the Government elephants!"

Which sure enough it was, roaming the cantonment certainly, with a piece of broken chain on its leg, but a mind free of intent to harm any man. One moment later, however, and the hero of my tale would have probably had to pay four hundred or more rupees out of his own pocket for shooting without a licence.

The tail of the real offender was soon afterwards exchanged for the five-pound note, and Rangoon slept in peace again. It was never known who really shot him. A native passing through some of the most unfrequented jungle paths, smelt a slightly unpleasant odour, which was soon accounted for by his coming upon the outstretched body of the "rogue" elephant, which had been dead then for some weeks. Fifty rupees, however, is a large sum in a native's eyes, and it inspired the one in question with courage to cut off its tail, and claim the promised reward; and if he died of cholera in consequence, I dare say it served to give him a handsome funeral.

The commissariat officer in Rangoon used to purchase elephants for the Bengal Government, and ship them thence for Calcutta. Eighty of these huge brutes went over in one ship, and the captain said he would take two hundred. The lower deck was cut away for their accommodation, and they were all chained, side by side, in the hold, each with his own mahout to attend upon him. Elephants are very sensitive to sea-sickness; and if the vessel in question had encountered a good heavy sea whilst crossing, and commenced to pitch and toss, the weight of them was said to be enough to sink her. However, they arrived in Calcutta quite safely. The shipping of them was a very curious sight. They were lifted by a heavy crane, and dropped into the hold. As soon as they found themselves hanging in mid-air the elephants appeared to become paralyzed with fear, and stretching out their unwieldy limbs would alight, like stiffened pigs, in the place appointed for them. They are very like pigs in many of their ways.

When the electric telegraph was being laid from Rangoon to Thyat-Myo, the officer in

appointment said that his greatest trouble was occasioned by the wild elephants, who, seeing nice stout posts erected in the jungle, thought they could have been placed there but for one purpose, and, setting to work on them immediately, crying, in elephant language, “God bless the Duke of Argyle,” would knock them down, and compel him to retrace his steps and see the work done all over again.

We were great at races in Rangoon, and the ponies and horses which we turned out, to say nothing of the amateur jockeys in their Calcutta colours, would have been a credit to any station. One of our days wound up with an elephant race, for which twelve or sixteen of these animals started, each carrying two officers and a flag. Six hurdles were erected for their benefit, and a deep trench dug. A very spirited sketch, by one of the riders, went home by the next mail to the *Illustrated News*, in which the elephants were represented flying over the hurdles like horses : a slight exaggeration, and intended to be so ; but which we found on inquiry that many people in England had taken for gospel truth ! The

real effect, though widely different, was scarcely less ludicrous. The ponderous racers having started, went plodding through the trench, nearly upsetting all the jockeys, who were not accustomed to such up-and-down hill work, and then trampling down every hurdle which intercepted their path, gravely presented themselves before the winning-post blinking their little eyes and flapping their big ears, with a solemn want of excitement which was killing. Only one, which was young and unused to noise and shouting, bolted off the course, and approached with a shambling gait so near to the frail erection which we called a “grand stand,” that the ladies were anticipating a sudden overthrow, which—had he chosen to knock against one of the posts which supported it—must inevitably have been the result.

I have mentioned the little Pegu ponies in their private capacity, but they deserve a word here as to the very creditable appearance they used to make in public. When first purchasd they are generally perfectly untrained, therefore their skill is chiefly due to the gentlemen

who own them. A race of Burmese, called “Shans,” bring them in by dozens to the cantonment for sale, but as at that period they are mostly colts, it is rather a chance what they will turn out. The “Shans” themselves ride in the most extraordinary manner : they have a small native saddle, and a pair of shoe-stirrups connected by a piece of rope, thrown over it, therefore they ride only by equilibrium ; their stirrup-leathers also are so short that their knees are almost up to their noses, and their bridles are only head-stalls.

When several “Shans” together are ordered to put their ponies through their paces, they sit half-naked in the manner described, with their long black hair streaming down their backs, and then with a “whoop” and a yell, they send their little steeds clattering over everything—felled wood or stones ; they appear to have no fear of their falling lame. The ponies are, in consequence, very sure-footed, and are mostly clever jumpers. I can remember several, who used to take their hurdles in first-rate style, considering the length of their legs. The Burmese have races

amongst themselves, and are very fond of betting.

Once a year there is a grand boat-race on the Irrawaddy. The method of determining the winning boat is a very pretty one.

A hollow bamboo, with a rope run through it at each end of which depends a bouquet of flowers, is placed across a boat on the river. The boats pass either side of the bamboo, and the one which seizes the bouquet first, causing the flowers on the other side to disappear, is proclaimed victor. The Burmese have another curious custom which almost amounts to a law, and by which the loser and winner of a bet are obliged to join hands and dance together, in order to show that the former bears no ill-will for his want of luck. Yet, doubtless, this appears less absurd to them because more reasonable, than our own dancing. A gentleman who was visiting Calcutta for the first time placed himself in the hands of a native cicerone, and told him to show him everything that was worth seeing there. After they had gone the round of the government offices, and mess-houses, seen the public

gardens, theatre, and promenade, they came to a ball-room which was being decorated with white and pink calico, wreaths of flowers and flags, for a fancy ball, to take place the same evening.

“Why have you brought me here?” said the gentleman, who did not consider the sight worthy of his time and trouble; “what are all these preparations for?”

“I thought you might wish to see it,” was the answer given in Hindustani, and with perfect gravity; “it is for the ‘fools’ dance’ to-night.”

CHAPTER XIX.

INSECTS are a perfect nuisance all over India. A spot of hair-oil on the toilet-cover has power to summon a whole army of ants to run riot amongst the pin-cushions and scent-bottles; whilst, if a new arrival innocently lays her dresses in the wardrobe, and takes her bonnets from the stronghold of a tin case, she will probably find the folds of the former perforated by the white ants, whilst the artificial adornments of the latter, containing gum and varnish, have been fairly eaten up by the cockroaches. But even in India the insects are not so destructive as in Burmah.

Their variety, like their numbers, seemed endless, but they were most annoying at the

commencement of the rainy season. Then, as soon as the lamps were lighted, and preparations made for employing a quiet evening at home, they would begin to force themselves upon public notice. First, a few beetles of various sizes, attracted by the glare, would dart into the room with a *burr*, and join in treading a fantastic measure round the lamp, to be followed by flying-ants, with their gauzy wings, which drop off after a few seconds and remain upon the table; accompanied by a dreadful specimen of entomology called a green bug—which is diamond-shaped, and verdant-hued, and of an odour not to be mentioned. These unwelcome guests would be reinforced from time to time, until the light was dimmed with their numbers, and every instant the hand was raised to brush one or more away, from the face or neck, or to release a buzzing prisoner caught in the hairs of one's head. In the midst of which, a heavy rap upon the floor, followed by a spinning whirr, would intimate that an elephant beetle had been unable to sustain his heavy flight, and was struggling on his back until compassion

moved you to turn him over again, and find him clinging to your fingers with his pincers, in return for your humanity. I used to sit thus, in torture, vainly attempting to work or read, for some time, until wearied out, I have retired to bed simply to escape the attacks of the insects, and have found upon inspection my pocket full of beetles, green bugs career-ing in my hair, and flying-ants housed in the bosom of my dress. These last are the most perseveringly obnoxious of them all. A whole swarm will enter the house at dinner-time, and run about over the table, dropping their wings as they go; and I have seen a plateful of wings alone brushed off the cloth with the crumbs, whilst the insects themselves are almost more active without than with them. The natives roast and eat these ants, and an officer in our regiment had tasted them once cooked in like manner, and said they had much the flavour of nuts. The way in which they destroy property is wonderful, consider-ing their weapons and the places they besiege. If a stout box is placed on the floor, without being raised on bricks, a colony of them will

commence to work through it from the bottom, and eat books, clothes, or anything which it may contain, in a very short time. One day, whilst my husband was on a court-martial in Rangoon, it began to rain, and he sent a servant home for his boat-cloak, which he had used the week before and hung on a peg in his dressing-room to dry.

I took it up to send to him, and could scarcely believe my senses. A week before it had been a perfect boat-cloak, made of stout military cloth and lined; now, it was riddled through and through in every direction as though it had been planted as an ensign on the ramparts of a besieged town. It was beyond all mending or repairing, and was fit for nothing but to afford a few more repasts for the voracious little creatures which had reduced it to so deplorable a condition.

The bamboo is the Burman's “*pièce de résistance*.” He uses it for everything from bass to tie up his plants, to pillars whereon his house shall rest; but the prettiest use they put it to, is in the manufacture of painted boxes and other articles. These are formed

by plaiting strips of bamboo, the width of which differs according to the fineness of the work, for their pails to carry water are made upon the same principle as their drinking tumblers. The bamboo is woven into the shape required; and then made waterproof with oil and paint, the best things being highly finished, and ornamented with designs, chiefly arabesque, and all tasteful. Indeed in everything, the Burmese display the possession of much more taste than the natives of India. Their dress alone shows this. The women are coquettish in their nature; and halt, before entering a cantonment, to make themselves smart for the occasion. As they walk in groups of five and six, they have a very picturesque appearance. They wear a coloured cloth wound round the bosom, over which there is a silk or velvet jacket, which is in the shape of the “cosaque,” and ornamented with red or orange tassels; the native cloth which is worn round the waist, hanging down like a petticoat, opens in front, so that the right leg is always seen in walking; in their hair they usually have bunches of

flowers, and often white gauze veils, and they darken the circle round their eyes, and redden their cheeks and lips, but for this some of the ladies of the present day will surely not be the ones to blame them. The men trouble themselves very little about finery, but they are all tattooed on the legs and thighs in the form of a pair of breeches. This operation is performed when they are quite little children, and I suppose is renewed as they grow out of it, as the breeches are quite large enough for them as men.

Both sexes smoke inordinately, and if they have not their cigar in their mouths, it is stuck through one of the holes in their ears, which are quite large enough to admit it, and in which they sometimes wear little bunches of flowers. During my residence in Rangoon, I went to a Burmese “pooay,” or play—for amongst other things, they are excessively fond of theatricals and excitement of all kinds. This “pooay” took place in a large species of barn at Kemmendine, and the Burmese readily admitted us, and placed chairs so that we might see the performance well. It was diffi-

cult to see anything on a first entrance, for the place was so full of tobacco smoke that the actors were enveloped as by clouds, and my eyes did nothing but water. However, when I had grown better used to the atmosphere, I perceived that the centre of the barn was considered the stage, and left unoccupied and in the middle of it stood a small tree planted in a pot, which was a garden ; whilst to one side were a variety of masks (such as the head of a horse, a cock, or a bull) which, when any performer sported, you were bound to recognize him as the animal pourtrayed, even though he might have played the hero of the piece a moment before. The orchestra consisted of “a solemn procession of one,” who, squatted in the midst of a girdle of tom-toms, of different keys, had a set of pipes fastened under his chin, and another of musical glasses just in front of him ; in fact, the orchestra was the most astonishing actor of the whole company. We could not in the least understand the play, which we were told was a thing to be thankful for ; therefore, I am spared the temptation of writing it down here. There

was a prince, and a princess, of course, there always is in native plays; and a great deal of gesticulation and running about, apparently to no purpose; but the gentlemen and ladies with cigars seemed to think it all right, and applauded so vehemently that it was good to hear them. After the play came a ballet, which was much more wonderful than graceful, although, as far as I could see, it lacked the indecency of the Madras nautch-dances.

The “pet” was a girl, dressed precisely in the manner I have described her fellow-countrywomen to dress, which, as may be supposed, is a very awkward garb to show any agility in. But the Burmese “pets” do not spring, or show their legs, even so much as in walking. Stooping slightly, as though about to sit down, the danseuse—in the most uncomfortable of positions—spun herself round and round, and backwards and forwards, whilst the audience clapped and shouted, and exclaimed aloud at the skill she displayed. But the theatre was very full and close, and the performance unedifying, and although I liked my dear Burmese very much, I was thankful

on that occasion to shake myself free of them and their tobacco smoke, and get out into the open air again.

Whilst waiting there until the little carriage, which was to take me home, came round, an old woman darted forward with a piece of rag and rubbed it on my arm, which was displayed by a falling sleeve, to see, I suppose, if the colouring matter would come off: whilst a young Burmese, armed with a black board and white chalk, sat down deliberately before me to take my portrait. Both screamed with laughter on being discovered, and ran away, and came back to grin farewell as I drove off. Such is the general Burmese character; light-hearted in the extreme, compared with the grave, stolid indifference displayed by most of the natives in India when in contact with Europeans. The Burmese laws are not much in favour of the weaker vessel, but in this again, I cannot see that in most respects our civilization teaches us to outstrip them.

A divorce is very easy to obtain, and only costs about a rupee—value, two shillings—therefore the Burmese husband may, if he

chooses, run through an unlimited quantity of wives. But, talking on the subject with a very sensible native, who spoke good English, I could not find that they often took advantage of the privilege. His answer was given much in the same words as that of a Mussulman of whom I asked, why (since he was permitted by his religion) he did not have four wives? “I know that I may,” he said, “but I have no wish to do so; I find one more than enough.”

As I ponder, numberless stories and incidents crowd upon my memory, which were I to jot down here, “Gup” would swell to twice its size; but these are but papers, written for a magazine, and I would remember in time that brevity is sometimes the soul of interest as well as of wit.

One word, however, before I finish, and that with regard to my title itself. I dare say it has puzzled many of my readers by the quaintness of its sound, although it will have fallen with a familiar resonance upon all Indian ears. “Gup” is the Hindustani for “Gossip”—*voilà tout*.

And may I hope, in conclusion, that if my Gossip can lay no claim to being considered either instructive or amusing, it may at least be passed, by those who have honoured me with their attention, as harmless.

THE END.

